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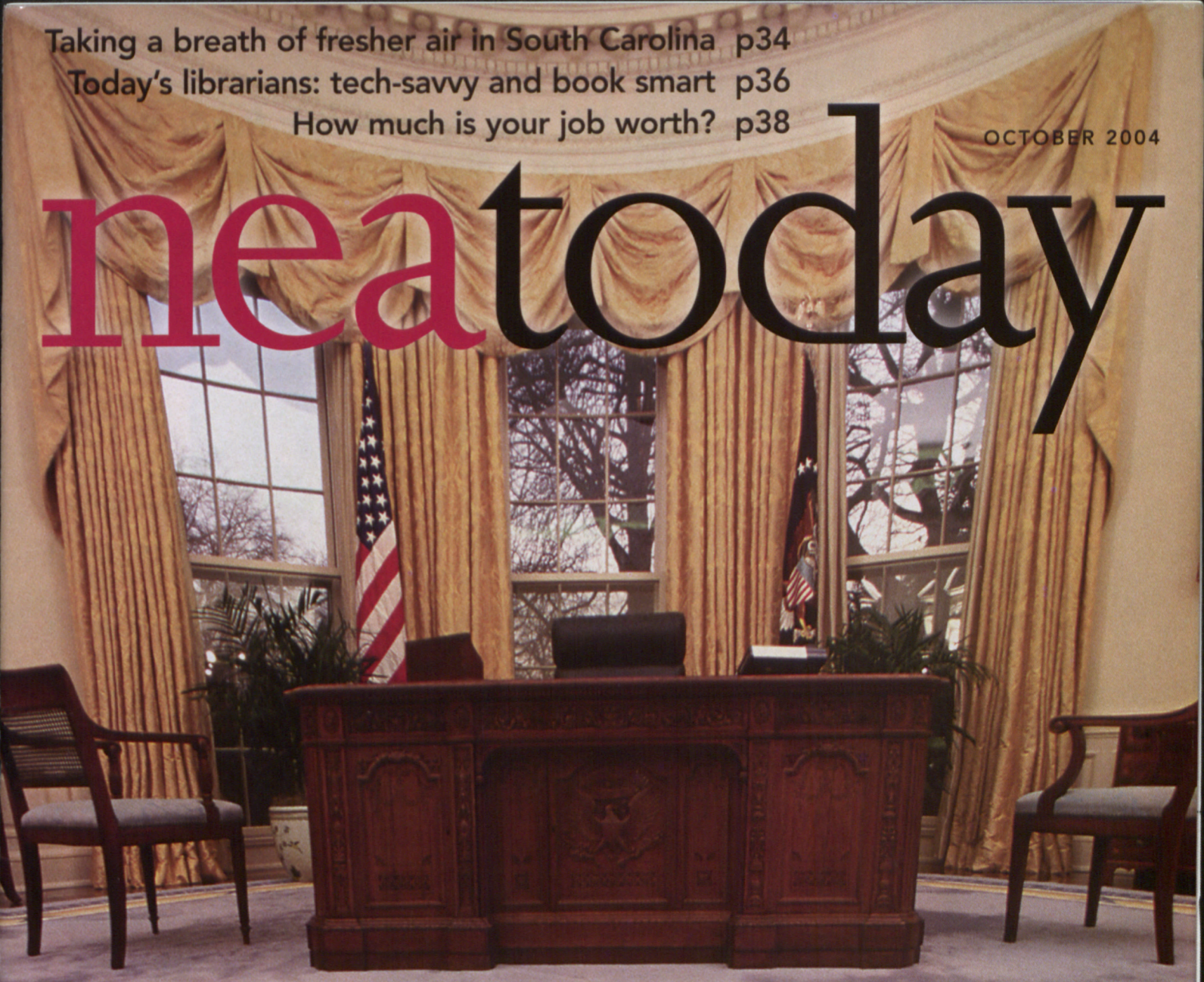

DECISION TIME

WHAT DO EDUCATORS WANT FROM THE OVAL OFFICE?

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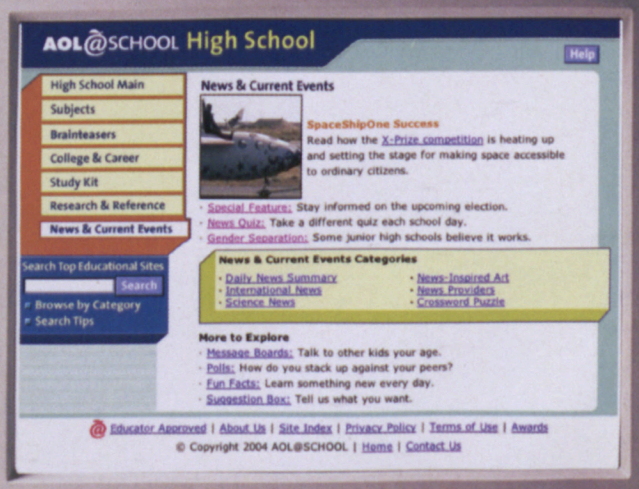
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features

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DECISION TIME

What do educators most want from Washington? R-E-S-P-E-C-T. But after enduring budget cuts, attacks on their qualifications, and a law that shortchanges kids and schools, teachers and support professionals wonder if they'll ever get it. Their best hope for change? Diving into politics and speaking up on Election Day.

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ESP

Victory for a Living Wage 45

With just $400 a month in take-home pay, some Alabama support professionals couldn't afford to write a rent check or pump gas into their cars. Instead, they lived in and out of homeless shelters, walking to work to save bus fare, and relying on government assistance to feed their kids. But on August 10, after a nine-month "living wage" campaign run by the local affiliate in Birmingham, that all began to change.

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Two relatives share the same passion for the classroom—and a set of kidneys. Meet Albert Paduano, a New York high school health teacher with long-time kidney problems, and Scott Stickney, a Pennsylvania Latin teacher and his uncle's life-saver. Meanwhile, in Washington, librarian Sara Harlan (right) donates her time and energy to fund-raise for children in Haiti and Guatemala.

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When a young Connecticut teacher died suddenly, tough teenagers became heartbroken children. But they found solace and healing by jotting in classroom journals and penning poetry to share.

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Acts of Engagement

Remember the first time you voted? The first time you raised a fist of solidarity? Sent a missive to your congresswoman? Go ahead—grin. It was probably a very cool moment. After all, you'd just tested one of the first lessons in American civics: that ours is a society that every day gives us the chance to say what's on our minds, whether powerful people like it or not. Through the vote, the press, our own loud voices, we have a right to make noise, to affect change. ¶ Democracy. Cool, indeed. ¶ At *NEA Today*, we've been listening to what's on your minds this election season—your "noise"—and the volume is definitely up, about flawed education laws, about misguided lawmakers, about the disrespect for public educators that seems to undergird federal policy (see Cover Story, page 22). ¶ So now the question: Where will your indignation lead? Will you hit the streets as you did 5, 15, 30 years ago over affirmative action, AIDS, Vietnam? Will you shout out at your city council meeting over cutbacks in school construction? Will you trek around your neighborhood block with leaflets in support of that awesome school board member on the warpath against poor teacher pay? (See the latest compensation study in "A Teacher's Worth," page 38.) ¶ Exactly what moves you to act, only you know for sure. The great news is that you can, and in this issue we remind you of some of the wonderfully simple ways out there for the choosin'. (See "Who Me? An Activist?" page 28.) We also serve up the delightful stories of some of your colleagues who asked, "Why not me?" and are now running for office. (See "Schoolhouse to Statehouse," page 31). You'll love their audacity and spirit—and most of all, their belief that there's plenty all of us can do, big and little, that counts as throwing our hats in the ring. ¶ With so much at stake for educators in this election year and beyond, with that quintessential issue of respect looming so large, we trust you will find the right thing for you—just don't forget to look. Recall your first "acts of engagement" and be re-inspired. Shout, sing, run, vote, hit the streets, make change. And have a blast while you do. ¶ We'll be watching, listening, and waiting for your reports.

Marilyn Milloy

EDITOR MARILYN MILLOY

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Is there a new teacher in the family?

Teaching is hereditary—it tends to run in families. If you have a son or daughter—or even a niece or nephew—who's started a new teaching career this fall, consider a gift befitting the occasion. **The NEA Professional Library** has the gifts you need to help get all the new teachers in your life off to a great start!

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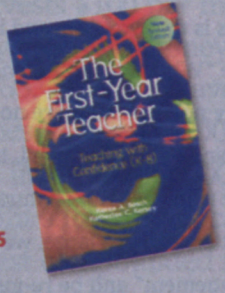

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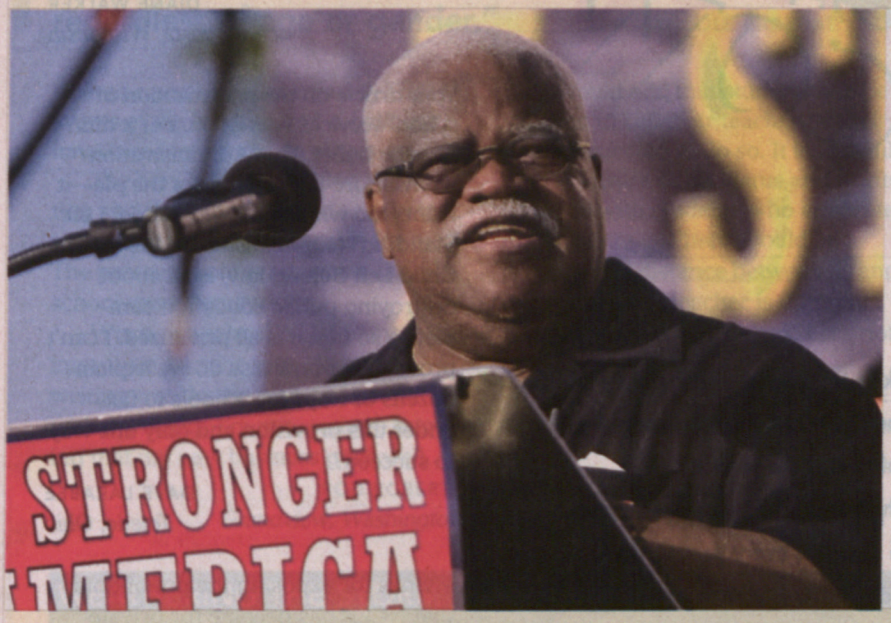
Great Public Schools for Every Child

'With this election, we confront a life-changing choice'

Robert Frost's poem, "The Road Not Taken," hits the nail on the head: with this election, we find ourselves at a life-changing fork in the road.

The poem is plainspoken, as Frost himself was. As a young man, he's walking in a yellow wood and finds himself looking down two roads. Each appeals to him in some ways. But he knows he cannot straddle the two. He's got to choose. And so must we. On November 2, each of us must vote for change or vote to continue down the road we are currently on.



"It is not an option to stay home on Election Day. Wouldn't that be ironic! We go to war in Iraq to spread freedom and liberty, yet don't vote ourselves. We must not allow that to happen."

—REG WEAVER

Consider now what that choice will mean to us from our perspective as teachers and education support professionals. Consider why NEA is recommending a vote for John Kerry and change.

A vote for the current road will bring more of what we've seen these last four years. School budgets strained to the breaking point by the unfunded mandates of the so-called No Child Left Behind act. Lack of respect for educators. More testing. Narrowing the curriculum as pressure grows to teach to the test. More voucher programs. Mortgaging our children's future to build schools in Iraq, while the schools of our own cities crumble and decay. Spiraling health care costs that consume any wage increases. A new push to privatize Social Security.

A vote for change will bring just that—change. Investing in education so the children of America have the skills they need to compete successfully in the global economy of the 21st century. Giving educators a seat at the table when crafting reforms. Fixing and fully funding the No Child Left Behind and the Individuals with Disabilities in Education Acts. Measuring student achievement by more than a single test score. Taking proven steps to close the achievement gap such as reducing class size. Giving all children access to quality preschool programs. Opposing vouchers. Restoring cuts in after-school programs. Putting the lid on health care costs. Strengthening Social Security.

It's a stark contrast. And though the campaigns have gotten negative—on both sides—it is not an option to stay home on Election Day. Wouldn't that be ironic! We go to war in Iraq to spread freedom and liberty, yet don't vote ourselves. We must not allow that to happen.

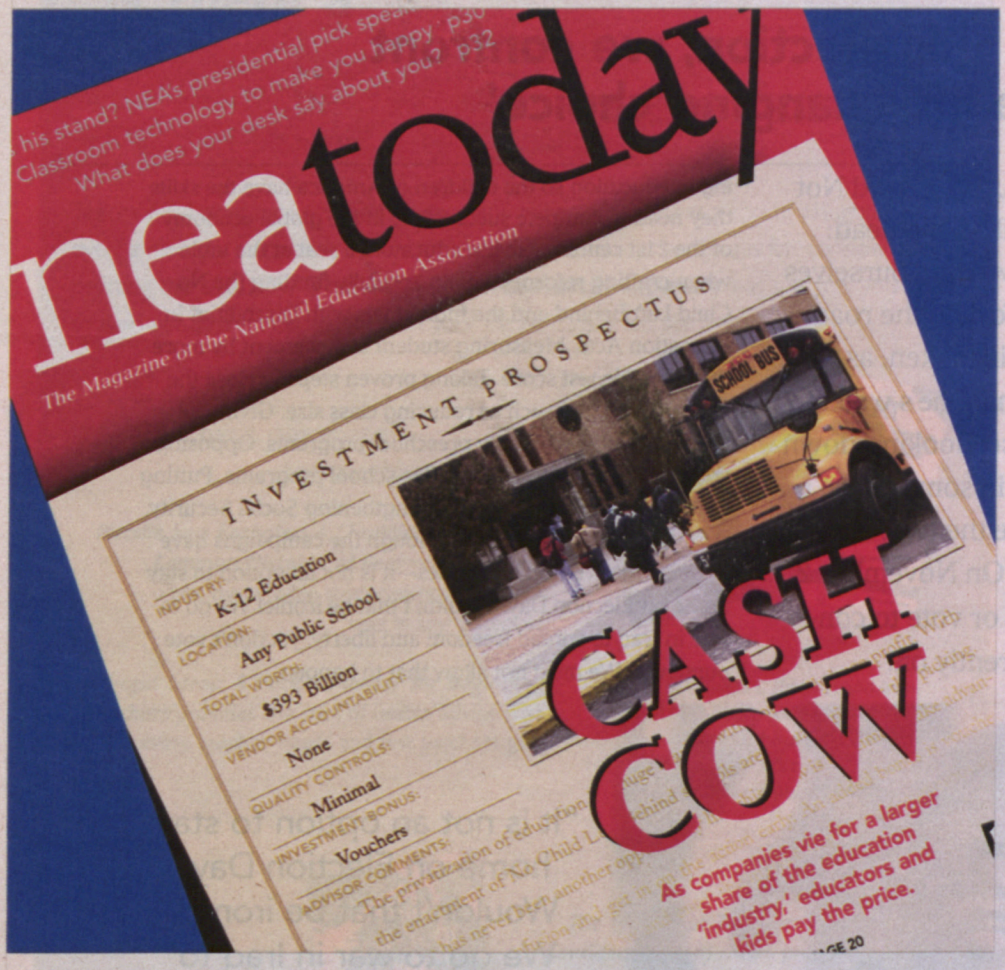
In Western Europe, the voting rate is nearly 80 percent among age-eligible voters. In contrast, less than half the Americans old enough to vote did so in the 2000 presidential election. If we mean to set an example and spread freedom throughout the world, we've got to do better.

Robert Frost recognized that he was making a life-changing choice when he chose between the two roads in that yellow wood. As an old man, he looks back with satisfaction at his choice and says, "That has made all the difference."

Similarly, the choice we make this Election Day will make a world of difference in our professional lives. Ask yourself: When you wake up on November 3, on which road do you want to be?

NEA PRESIDENT REG WEAVER

PHOTO: SCOTT SHAW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Classroom technology to make you happy p30
What does your desk say about you? p32
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INVESTMENT BONUS: Vouchers
ADVISOR COMMENTS:
SCHOOL BUS
CASH COW
As companies vie for a larger share of the education 'industry,' educators and kids pay the price.

PRIVATIZATION

As an endangered species—a Milwaukee art teacher—I constantly feel the threat from voucher schools, described in "Cash Cow" (cover story, September), especially at the start of the school year.

After our enrollment is locked in on the third Friday in September, our public funding also is locked in. When we lose more students every year to these voucher programs, our school loses more funding. And yet, the real problem isn't just that we are losing these students, but that we're getting them back too late.

Voucher schools expel students for a variety of reasons: Student has special needs; student was more than the voucher school could handle; et al. When they return, students still have their issues, but not the public education funds to go along. So we are forced to make cuts; thus far we have lost both music and librarian positions, as well as assistants.

The famous economist Milton Friedman seems to think vouchers and a free-market system should work for my school and district. Friedman hasn't seen the bitterness and deflated self-worth in my students' eyes as they come back from being kicked out of a voucher school.

JEFFERY JOHNSON
Milwaukee, Wisconsin

I drive a bus for our public school system and our jobs have been in jeopardy the past 2–3 years because our administration and some board members would like to privatize our transportation.

We've been inquiring about how a private company, which obviously needs to make a profit, can come in and do it cheaper than a public school district. We are told the company would more than likely hire the drivers we have now, but why, after 20 years of driving for the district, would I take almost a one-third cut in my hourly wage, with almost no benefits package?!

Right now all our drivers are from the district or community. They know a lot of the kids and families, and that creates an interest you can't get from someone who just has a job to do.

DIANE WALKER
Augusta, Wisconsin

Your article on the privatization of school services was good, but it didn't bite the bullet. This Administration wants more than a piece of the pie—it wants the whole pie! "No School Left Standing" (euphemistically, the No Child Left Behind law) is all about destroying public education completely so that it is all privatized. I can't prove it, but how else do we explain dozens of ways for schools to fail under this provision and only one way to succeed?

DAVE LARABEE
Toledo, Ohio

Thanks for exposing the pot of gold that NCLB has become for private companies. The amount of public cash they're raking in boggles the mind.

My personal experience has to do with our school being forced to buy and use a scripted reading program. These programs are extremely expensive and often are retooled phonics programs with a history of failure.

In my case, we were shown a slick video by a presenter who didn't even have an advanced degree in reading for a program that ignored National Reading Panel recommendations. All this for about $50,000 of your money!

DEREK BOUCHER
Clovis, California

NEA'S PICK FOR PRESIDENT

It causes me great angst each time I read that NEA has backed a political candidate. First of all, I rarely agree with its choice. Second, I do not appreciate being lumped into a category of any sort. We teachers are independent thinkers capable of making our own political choices, which should be based on the higher good for our state or country—not just on what someone on the campaign trail says will be done to benefit education after the election.

RICKY KINGDON
Pekin, Illinois

This year is the first year both my wife and I have contributed to Democratic campaigns. We both voted Republican in the last two elections and have considered ourselves conservative. The events of the last two-and-a-half years have convinced us to do otherwise.

The No Child Left Behind legislation and the national trend to test, test, test, made teaching miserable for me. The pressures put on the staff at my school were tremendous.

When our school failed to meet its improvement schedule, I knew the writing was on the wall and got out with my sanity. I'm now retired, hoping that my new business goes well.

ROD ROBERTS
Grandview, Washington

FIRST NAMES

In response to Kelly Merrill's answer to the September Debate, "Should teachers allow students to call them by their first names?" I was shocked Merrill didn't include "Ms." among the listed titles of respect. Ms. is a hard-won title that gives women the option of not being identified by their marital status, in the same way men are never identified by marital status.

My students know that I go by Ms. and correct other students when they call me Mrs. They really get the power of titles.

JOY LOHRER
Cincinnati, Ohio

About the debate over first names, I wholeheartedly agree with Kelly Merrill. I would add that students will be satisfied to call their teacher by their title, if expected to do so. It is an adult who is unsure of his status and wants leverage with students who advocates for first names. There should be a professional distance between us and our students. A teacher is different than a hardware store clerk. Let's not be ashamed of that.

CURTIS DREESE
Spokane, Washington

I resent the implication made by Brian White in the debate, in which White supports the use of his first name by students but warns: "Perhaps a new, 22-year-old teacher, especially a female, should not have students use her first name. She may have enough difficulty establishing a professional relationship as it is."

As a new, 20-something teacher just a few years back, I gained my students' respect by creating an environment that focused on academic achievement and personal accountability. I was prepared, I was conscientious, and I was hard-working. I still am, even though I'm now in my 30s, but alas, still a woman.

Good teachers earn their students' respect, regardless of age or gender.

NICOLE BARADAT
Sacramento, California

"Good teachers earn their students' respect, regardless of age or gender." —NICOLE BARADAT

KUDOS

I think the September issue of *NEA Today* is, by far, one of the best publications you've put out in my 44 years of membership. Though retired, I found myself mentally bookmarking items to call to the attention of friends still in the classroom. Those great layouts really draw your eyes to attention.

Keep up your fantastic work!

BILL SHIRLEY
Kansas City, Missouri

What a pleasant surprise! Great humor in the magazine. I loved the article "It's a Teacher Thing" (September). Thanks for making me laugh.

EILEEN TAYLOR
Cincinnati, Ohio

WEATHERING THE STORM

More than 100 Florida Education Association (FEA) members were left homeless last month, while thousands of their colleagues face huge home repair bills, after Hurricane Charley brutally raked the state's gulf coast. And, if that weren't bad enough—not three weeks later, Hurricane Frances rolled into town.

"This storm was unbelievable," writes Cheryl Robinson of Deland, Florida. "It stayed for hours and hours and hours....Today as I traveled back to my home, street after street was impassable due to fallen trees and downed power lines. By the grace of God, my house was not damaged.... Continue to keep us in your thoughts and prayers."

But we can do even more than that. To help its members without roofs, without beds, without running water and other necessities, FEA created a special fund for hurricane victims. To contribute, send a check to FEA Hurricane Charley Relief Fund, 213 S. Adams St., Tallahassee, FL 32301.

LET'S TALK

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Letters are edited for length and clarity.

upfront

Trends
Facts
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Research
First 5
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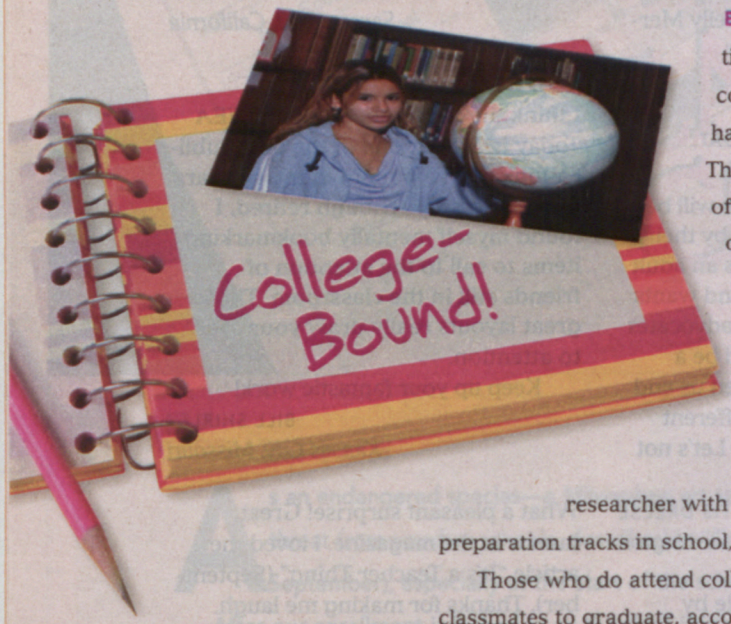
Quotes

Who's Really Getting Ahead?

First the good news: the U.S. population has never been better educated. In fact, 85 percent of Americans 25 years and older have at least a high school diploma, while 27 percent have at least a bachelor's degree—all-time highs on both counts, according to the U.S. Census Bureau.



BUT THE NEWS ISN'T SO ROSY for the nation's Hispanic population, which lags behind all racial groups in high school and college completion rates. Just 57 percent of Hispanics 25 years or older have a high school degree, while only 11 percent have a bachelor's. The picture isn't much better for the younger set: only 62 percent of Hispanic 25- to 29-year-olds have completed high school and only 10 percent have finished college.

Limited access to college aid information could be keeping many students off campus, according to The Tomás Rivera Policy Institute at the University of Southern California. Many Hispanic students don't take the PSAT or SAT, which means their names aren't submitted to financial aid and academic institutions, says Celina Torres, an education researcher with the institute. Others encounter obstacles enrolling in college preparation tracks in school, which further alienates them from useful resources, she adds.

Those who do attend college face an uphill battle. They are half as likely as their white classmates to graduate, according to the Pew Hispanic Center, partly because Hispanic students attend less selective colleges and universities. Research shows students enrolled in more selective schools have a greater chance of earning degrees.

Charter School Update

THE RESULTS ARE IN: Low-income and minority students score higher at regular public schools than they do at charter schools, according to results from the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP), a nationwide testing program. That interesting finding appeared very quietly on the U.S. Department of Education Web site nearly a year ago, buried under other statistics. Federal officials deny trying to hide anything. "I guess that was poor publicity on our part," Robert Lerner, federal commissioner for education statistics, told *The New York Times*, which reported the finding in August.

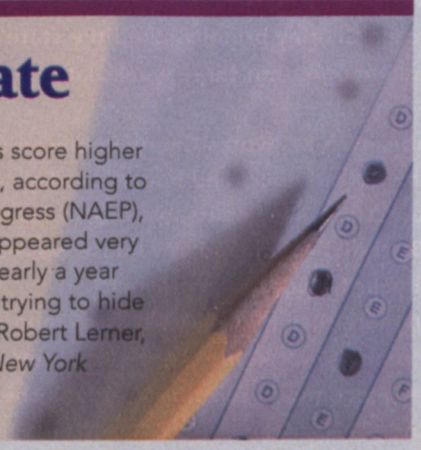


PHOTO TOP: NATHAN HAM, COMSTOCK; BOTTOM: COMSTOCK

Pint-Size Politico

On a recent evening, Lily Thorpe rushes to prepare for a candidates debate in Grand Junction, Colorado. Still, she has time to talk about her own politics, just as soon as her mom finishes braiding her hair.

THIS IS LIFE when you're the 10-year-old founder of Kids Campaign, a political action committee dedicated to raising awareness of children's issues. You think about politics constantly—like why haven't President George W. Bush and Senator John Kerry responded to her questionnaires?

"I've written to both of them—twice!" says Lily, who runs a "non-partisan" campaign. "I just want to know what they're going to do for kids!"

Lily first got hooked on politics while researching a history project at her school, Mesa View Elementary School, with 14-year-old encyclopedias. Since then, her political acumen has developed to include a reasoned analysis of the revised Elementary and Secondary Education Act (the so-called No Child Left Behind law)—"A good law, but when President Bush signed it, he didn't put any money to the schools and that's what is wrong."

This combination of youth and political maturity has made Lily a sought-after guest at political events. But she's still a kid too—"I think I'll wear a pink shirt and a pink skirt with flowers on it," she muses. "And my blue-flowered sneakers."

Techno Teaching

Feel like that new teacher down the hall is leaving you in the chalk dust with her high-tech lessons? Think again. Turns out veteran teachers are just as tech savvy as their younger colleagues.

NEARLY 90 PERCENT OF TEACHERS believe technology plays an important role in their professional lives, contributing to richer lesson plans, more engaged learners, and more personalized instruction, according to a new survey conducted by the nonprofit education technology group NetDay in cooperation with NEA.

> RICH LESSON PLANS
> ENGAGED LEARNERS
> PERSONALIZED INSTRUCTION

YET, WHILE TEACHERS of all experience levels strive to provide a technology-rich learning environment, they say lack of time and lack of computers present the greatest obstacles.

NEARLY 40 PERCENT of teachers also believe their preservice training did little to prepare them to teach with technology. (Although, among younger teachers, 90 percent found their college training at least somewhat useful.)

BY CONTRAST, 91 percent say their schools provide sufficient professional development.

Capitol Report

Voc-Ed Gets a Voice

Funding for career and technical education (CTE) got plenty of attention over the summer. Congress began to reauthorize the Carl D. Perkins Vocational and Technical Education Act, which provides $1.3 billion annually to secondary and postsecondary schools for career-focused education. It's the largest source of federal funding to high schools and a critical source of program support money to community colleges. Ninety-six percent of high school students take at least one CTE course.

Although the reauthorization bills introduced by the House of Representatives and the Senate have their merits, they are not without flaws. Most notably, both bills contain provisions that ultimately could tie Perkins funding to students' academic performance under the No Child Left Behind law (NCLB). The House and Senate are considering changes suggested by NEA to ensure that NCLB is not the only measure used to evaluate CTE programs. If changes are not made, however, schools failing to make adequate yearly progress under NCLB could lose their Perkins funding. The House and Senate were scheduled to continue work on their bills in September.

Have a great idea?

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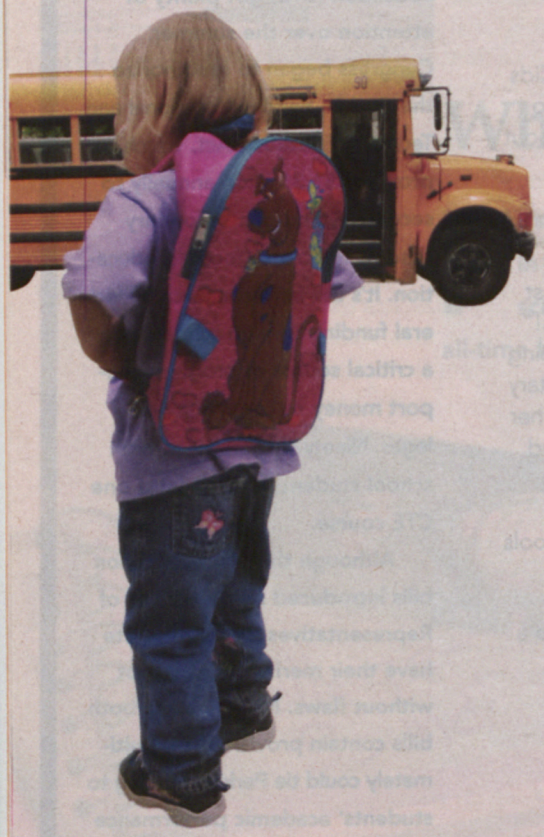
PHOTO TOP: KIDS CAMPAIGN; BOTTOM: THINKSTOCK

Thumbs Up or Thumbs Down?



How do you track 45,000 students coming and going each day? The answer could be at your fingertips.

OVER THE SUMMER, school officials in Pinellas County, Florida, installed a new electronic fingerprint system to keep tabs on students who ride the district's 750 school buses.

As students board the bus, they place their thumbs on a scanner that tells the driver whether the student is on the right bus. The system does not catalog a student's exact fingerprint, says Terry Palmer, the district's transportation director. Instead, it picks up unique characteristics of each print, encrypts them, and stores the file in a district database with the student's identification number and transportation information. Parents can choose to keep their children out of the tracking system, Palmer adds.

"Obviously the more parents and kids who participate, the better off we'll be," says Palmer, since the program tracks only those students enrolled in the program.

The $2.3 million technology, which also includes a global positioning system to track the location of the buses, does not require students to use a badge or identification card either, which could be broken, lost, or left at home.

"Part of the attraction of this is kids are not going to forget their thumbs," Palmer adds.

FOR THE Smile Camera

IT NEVER FAILS: School picture day always arrives on the same day as a huge pimple or bad hairstyle. Despite it all, moms and dads shelled out, on average, $22.58 each for portrait packages last year, kicking the $1.6 billion school portrait industry into high gear after years of downward trends, according to Photo Marketing Association International. The increase in purchases could be linked to the emergence of new technology, including retouching and electronic options, and the wider range of portrait packages. Film still dominates the market, however—only 2.6 percent of school portraits have gone digital. Everyone say cheese!

—EMILY GOODMAN

PHOTOS: NATHAN HAM

This Is Just a Test—Again

It's bad enough for students to suffer stomach butterflies and high-stakes test-taking anxiety once during their high school careers. Last year, some Arizona high schools asked juniors and seniors who already had performed well on the state test to grind it out once more. Read: take the same test over, because, well, you just may do better.

Insanity of the Month

WHAT'S UP? Until 2003, the state's school ranking formula included only the percentage of students who passed or failed the Arizona Instrument to Measure Standards. But last school year, state officials allowed schools to receive "extra credit" for students who placed at the top of the reading, writing, and math sections.

"We're being guided by an assessment system rather than the other way around—it's just absurd," says John Wright, president-elect of the Arizona Education Association.

In the Phoenix Union High School District, for instance, principals threw pizza parties and held raffles for repeat test-takers. Other districts honored the very best scorers during graduation ceremonies.

If at first you succeed, try and try again, principals said—in the name of looking better on state rankings.

An estimated 41 million "trick-or-treaters"—5- to 14-year-olds—will haunt neighborhoods nationwide later this month, according to the U.S. Census Bureau. And they will have plenty of places to stock up on goodies.

Getting Spooked!

These little ghosts and goblins will have 106 million potential stops (the number of housing units occupied year-round) to visit during their Halloween outings, the Census Bureau reports.

Global Takes

Turning Oil Into Schools

Recently, the African nation of Chad started pumping its own oil out of the ground, and the new revenue could mean good things for the nation's schools, according to the *Christian Science Monitor*. To keep the new funds from being siphoned off through corruption, the country has created a committee with members from nonprofit groups and the government to allocate the income, which officials expect will boost national revenue 50 percent during the next 20 years. More importantly, the country plans to spend 80 percent of the money on schools, clinics, roads, and other basic needs.

Building Character

Last month, 170,000 elementary and middle school students in the Chinese capital of Beijing began courses intended to teach them honesty. It's the first time character building has been a formal part of the curriculum, reports the *China Daily*.

"Youngsters are the future of China," an official says in the report. "We hope we can bring them up as honest people." The course's three-volume textbook, which education officials began compiling in 2003, includes age-appropriate articles, discussion questions, and cartoon illustrations for younger students.

Have a good story?

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Instilling a Sense of Pride

Students in Tucson, Arizona, have heard an awful lot about Davy Crockett and the Alamo over the years, but now they're also learning about the U.S.-Mexican War, how Mayans developed the concept of zero, and the origins of soccer.

"When a curriculum is relevant to a student, they want to learn," said Tomás Martínez, a specialist in the Tucson Unified School District's Mexican American/Raza Studies Department and an ESP board member of the Tucson Education Association.

Too many of Tucson's Chicano students, who constitute more than half of its enrollment, have grim prospects for a diploma. But with a $5,000 NEA Urban Grant, Martínez and a team of union and district partners have worked to close the gap by offering students a glimpse into their own history.

Both teachers and ESPs can take a three-day course on Mexican-American issues that provides curriculum units and helps them develop lessons of their own. "It's not going to be something that's on the shelf, unlike a lot of in-services," says Michael Gordy, a social studies teacher who took the course.

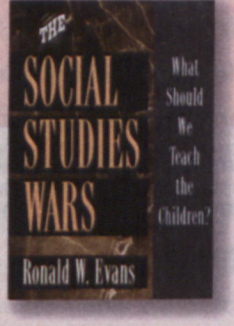
The Raza Studies department also teaches Chicano studies courses in secondary schools. "So far, students who take our courses are achieving at higher rates...and they're graduating," Martínez says. "We're instilling pride in students who lacked it and we're getting students interested in learning."

BOOK FOCUS

A Battle with No End in Sight

The nearly century-long skirmish over the social studies reminds us just how contentious curriculum issues can be. And it's not getting better.

In *The Social Studies Wars: What Should We Teach the Children?* (Teachers College Press, 2004) Ronald W. Evans, professor of education at San Diego State University, traces the embattled history of this hybrid field. From its nominal creation by a 1916 NEA commission to synthesize related disciplines, through the 1960s push to relate the subject to social issues of the time, to our current standards-driven narrowing of the field, social studies inevitably finds itself snagged in controversy.



In Evans' view, social studies should be "about helping young people grow into effective human beings who care about their lives in the community." So why the fuss?

Turns out, the concept of building a better citizen—whether to do it and how—is a matter of no small dispute. Social studies, in Evans' account, finds itself embroiled in an ideological war over nothing less than the direction of society.

Can there be peace? Only in a "public forum shorn of...propaganda," according to Evans. But it's been a while since we've had one of those.

PHOTOS TOP: JENNIFER THERMES, COREL CORPORATION; BOTTOM: TEACHERS COLLEGE PRESS

Survival of the Fittest

ONE OUT OF EVERY TWO new teachers quits within five years, and replacing them costs this country about $2.6 billion annually—not including the price paid by students, according to the Alliance for Excellent Education, a national research and policy institute that acts on behalf of low-performing secondary students.

But the Washington, D.C.-based Alliance has a solution: Give new teachers more support so they can be successful and productive and, as a result, more satisfied in their jobs.

"About 1 percent of all new teachers get the kind of comprehensive induction we're talking about," says Susan Frost, senior advisor at the Alliance. And yet, after looking at programs in states like Connecticut and California, her researchers found a quality start cuts attrition in half.

This doesn't mean a crash course in teaching, nor a few one-day workshops here and there. The Alliance recommends high-quality mentoring that involves classroom observations and assistance with lesson plans; common planning time; regular and ongoing seminars on classroom management tactics; and standards-based evaluations of new teachers.

The approach isn't cheap—probably about $4,000 per teacher—but it ultimately saves money by avoiding new hiring and training costs. Every dollar spent creates a payoff of $1.37, says Frost, who calls for the federal government to put up some of the cash in "under-resourced" districts.

"It's not some kind of out-there thing," Frost adds. "It's really about keeping our best new teachers in the classroom doing the work we want them to do."

Bodies in Motion

Last year, NEA members sweated their way to better health in NEA's Fitness Challenge. Now it's time to get your students moving. This month, NEA's Health Information Network will launch the SmartBody Fitness Info Center, an online community dedicated to helping kids, and their families, get active and get healthy. On the Web site, NEA members will find tips for creating engaging exercise programs, offering nutritional—and tasty—school lunches and snacks, and helping students reduce their stress. Teachers and ESPs also can exchange ideas and share their own school success stories.

WWW.NEAHEALTHINFO.ORG

Ready to start? Visit WWW.NEAHEALTHINFO.ORG and help your students get those smart bodies.

Two-Minute Tips

One Day at a Time

To keep my paperwork at a manageable level, I grade papers from just one class per day. In other words, I collect papers from first period on Monday, second period on Tuesday, and so forth. This keeps me up-to-date, and my students get almost immediate feedback.

—SUSAN DREYFUS
Memphis, Tennessee

Clipboards for Lefties

I discovered an easy way to use clipboards with left-handed note takers: Simply use the clipboard upside down! Take the papers out of the clip. Turn the board so the clip is at the bottom. And then clip the papers from the bottom. Lefties can write quite easily this way without the clip interfering.

—MARCIA LEE
South Windsor, Connecticut

Clapping for Attention

When my class gets noisy, I make up clapping patterns to get my students' attention. I clap a rhythm that the students must repeat. At other times, I clap a certain rhythm and students know to respond with a different rhythm I have taught them. I always get their full attention using this method.

—TITUS O. PECK
Milwaukee, Wisconsin

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2. PRIZES: There will be two grade level prize tiers: 5th-9th grade and 9th-12th grade. One Grand Prize winner and One First Prize winner will be selected for the 5th-8th grade level and one Grand Prize winner and one First Prize winner will be selected for the 9th-12th grade level. Each student winner receives a prize, along with his/her teacher and school:

5th-8th Grade Level:
GRAND PRIZE (1): Student: $5,000 (awarded in the form of a check);
Teacher: $500 grant to use for Classroom Activities (awarded in the form of a check);
School: A&E Television VHS Video Library (At least 8 hours in length. Est. Retail Value: $200).
FIRST PRIZE (1): Student: $2,500 (awarded in the form of a check);
Teacher: $250 grant to use for Classroom Activities (awarded in the form of a check);
School: A&E Television VHS Video Library (At least 8 hours in length. Est. Retail Value: $200).

9th-12th Grade Level:
GRAND PRIZE (1): Student: $5,000 (awarded in the form of a check);
Teacher: $500 grant to use for Classroom Activities (awarded in the form of a check);
School: A&E Television VHS Video Library (At least 8 hours in length. Est. Retail Value: $200).
FIRST PRIZE (1): Student: $2,500 (awarded in the form of a check);
Teacher: $250 grant to use for Classroom Activities (awarded in the form of a check);
School: A&E Television VHS Video Library (At least 8 hours in length. Est. Retail Value: $200).

Entries will be judged based on the following criteria: Persuasiveness (1/3); Creativity (1/3); Suitability (1/3). Essays that contain more than 300 words and/or are not legible are not entries. Winners will be selected by a panel of educators selected by Sponsor whose decisions are final on all matters relating to this contest. In the event of a tie, tied entries will be re-judged based solely on creativity. All Prizes will be awarded. Winners will be notified by overnight mail by 12/13/04. All Prizes are not transferable, no substitutions are allowed, except by the sponsor who reserves the right to award a prize of equal or greater value if advertised prize is unavailable. Student prizes will be awarded in the name of a parent or legal guardian. All parent/legal guardians of student winners will be required to execute and return an affidavit of eligibility, authenticity, liability/publicity release and assignment of rights within 10 days of notification, attempt or the prize will be forfeited and an alternate winner determined. Corresponding winning teachers will be required to complete a prize acceptance form prior to receiving, after winning students are notified. Taxes, if any, related to the prize are the responsibility of the individual winners. No responsibility or liability is assumed for damages, losses or injury resulting from acceptance or use of any prize.

3. All entries must be the sole, original work of the entrant. Judges may disqualify previously published essays, those that have won previous awards or competitions or those that are deemed lewd or offensive. Entries become the property of A&E Television Networks and will not be acknowledged or returned. Entrants/winners acknowledge and agree that their entries become the property of A&E Television Networks, which thereby has the right to edit, adapt, modify, expand, publish, promote and otherwise use entries in any way it sees fit. Acceptance of prize by winners, and prize recipients constitutes permission to use the winners' and prize recipients' names and likenesses without further compensation, except where prohibited by law. No responsibility is assumed for lost, misdirected, illegible, damaged, postage-due or late entries or mail. No information regarding entries or judging will be disclosed.

4. ELIGIBILITY: The contest is open to students grades 5-12, as of 9/1/04, who are legal residents of the U.S. (not including Puerto Rico), except employees and their families of A&E Television Networks, their parent companies, affiliates, subsidiaries, advertising and promotion agencies, public relations agencies and Bon Appetit Associates, Inc. This offer is void in Puerto Rico and wherever prohibited and subject to all federal, state and local laws.

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Power to the People

Wisconsin activists map out a statewide plan to fight funding cuts.

What's the tipping point for you? How angry or dissatisfied do you have to get before you take a stand? What moves you to act?

For Association members in Wisconsin, these are not rhetorical questions. They are fed up—so much so that they are rolling up their collective sleeves and preparing for a showdown in the next year with the legislature on two critical issues: adequate funding for public schools and a fair collective bargaining law for all school employees.

More specifically, they want to repeal school district revenue caps, which have robbed schools of the resources needed to maintain quality education, and get rid of Wisconsin's Qualified Economic Offer (QEO) law, which has stripped teachers of their collective bargaining rights.

"WHAT GIVES US POWER is 2.7 million members moving in the same direction. Collective power comes from us working together."

—NEA VICE PRESIDENT DENNIS VAN ROEKEL

How are they planning to fight? They've already begun. Over the summer some 600 activist members from every region of the state came together as local teams to attend the Wisconsin Education Association Council's (WEAC) Summer Organizing Institute. That's where they learned about the intricacies of school funding and collective bargaining, about building and using power, and about how best to inform, engage, and mobilize members and community leaders. In the process, they developed concrete strategies and wrote detailed local action plans to use back home.

NEA Vice President Dennis Van Roekel, who showed up at the Institute to offer support for this statewide effort, reminded participants that the ability to act in this way is really what the Association is about. "NEA doesn't have power because we have 2.7 million members," he told them. "What gives us power is 2.7 million members moving in the same direction. Collective power comes from us working together." Yet, he said, "Sometime we are made to feel that we shouldn't be asking for power."

Van Roekel described the 2004 elections, in Wisconsin and nationally, as a face-off between two starkly different visions of education and America's future—one that embraces equality of opportunity, another that treats education as a commodity, much like shampoo or a car: those who can afford the best ought to get the best. To fight for the right vision, he challenged participants to go beyond the "I'll try" mode of thinking or even the "I'll do my best" kind of pledge, to a "I'll do whatever it takes" dedication.

And that's what local leaders from across the state say they're fired up to do. The budget cutbacks and unsatisfactory contract settlements have been a reality for many years, they note.

WEAC teachers and school support personnel began laying the groundwork for this current effort months ago. Last April, state delegates to the Representative Assembly adopted a collective action plan designed to build support for changes to state funding laws and repeal of the onerous QEO bargaining law.

Now they're bringing that plan to life, using the principles of community organizing to push for needed budgetary and bargaining reforms. It's a huge undertaking, and every local is being asked to make a commitment to the campaign.

Greg Davis, a Lodi math teacher who's been active politically for years, says his team members—he attended along with teaching colleagues Barbara Weber and Mary Jane Nolan for the Lodi Teachers Association—did some nitty gritty planning for fall events. They strategized on ways to get more members out to the GOTV political fair being sponsored by 14 local associations, and they worked out logistics for their literature drop/chili feed coming up in a few weeks. They also made plans to support WEAC's "I see Red day" on October 15 (wearing red indicates a promise to vote for candidates who support repeal of the QEO and revenue controls).

Davis is upbeat about all of their plans to engage members and he's personally optimistic about the November elections. "Members already seem to know what's at stake this fall," he says. "People who used to say that it doesn't really matter who's in office now say that it does matter. They can see now that politics does affect their daily lives."

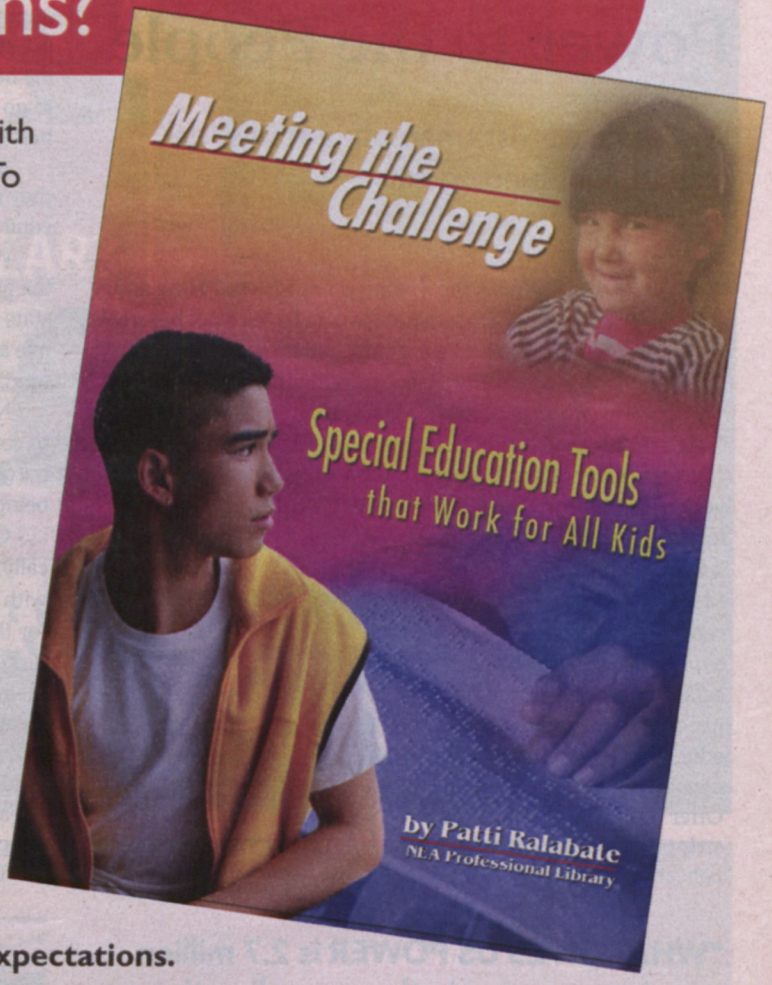
Above: NEA Vice President **Dennis Van Roekel** urges Wisconsin members to fight for change. Below: Wisconsin educators came together in solidarity at the Wisconsin Education Association Council's Summer Organizing Institute.

What will it take for WEAC members to succeed this fall? A collective will—and vigilance. As Van Roekel told them, "It's about you. If you don't like the way things are, change them."

—NANCY KOCHUK

PHOTOS: BILL HURLEY/WEAC

Are you "meeting the challenges" of today's classrooms?



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High Court Voids Vouchers

COLORADO The Colorado Supreme Court has ruled that the state's "pilot" voucher program is "unconstitutional beyond a reasonable doubt." The court found that the 2003 voucher law violates the state constitution's local control provisions, forcing school districts to "turn over a portion of their locally raised funds to nonpublic schools over whose instruction [they] have no control."

The accountability issue has twice led Colorado voters to reject voucher-related ballot initiatives, reports **Colorado Education Association (CEA)** staffer Deborah Fallin. "Wherever voucher plans do exist in this country," she says, "they have been done legislatively, not by a direct vote of the people."

The plaintiffs in this suit, parents of children affected by the voucher plan, received support from an alliance of pro-public education groups. CEA and NEA were lead counsel in the case.

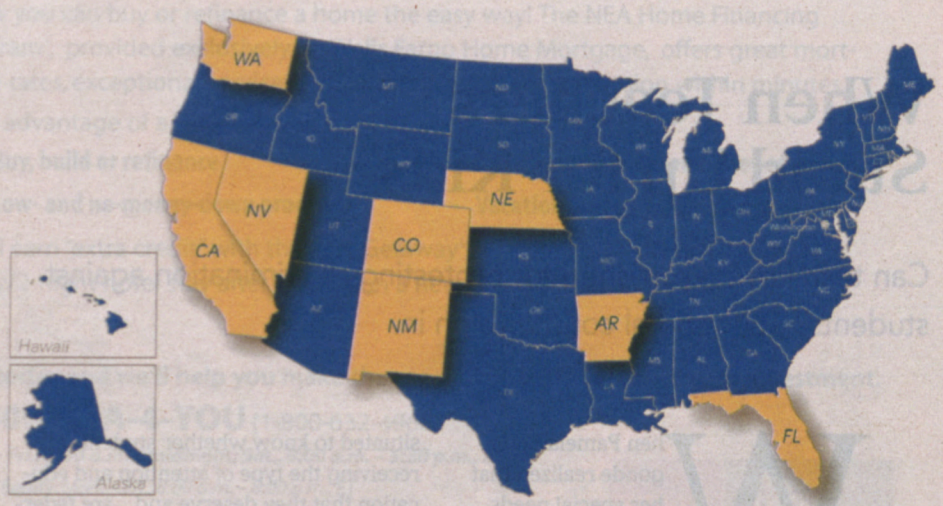
Is Florida Next in Line?

FLORIDA In a suit supported by the **Florida Education Association** and other pro-public education groups, a state appeals court has struck down a 1999 voucher law allowing students from struggling public schools to attend private or religious schools with taxpayer money. The court ruled that this program violates a state constitutional provision specifying that no state revenue "shall ever be taken from the public treasury" to "directly or indirectly support" sectarian institutions. The case now goes to the Florida Supreme Court.

Charters Go to Public Vote

WASHINGTON As November Election Day nears, **Washington Education Association** members and other public school supporters are campaigning hard for a "reject" vote in Referendum 55. A "no" vote would enable voters to repeal a law allowing establishment of at least 45 new charter schools, operated without many of the rules governing regular public schools.

"Diverting $100 million from existing public schools into experimental charter schools isn't the answer," says Vancouver teacher Fern Tresvan. "We should invest in proven solutions that will improve the quality of *all* schools."



Costing Out Education

NEBRASKA School funding "adequacy and equity" (A&E) is a simple concept: You cost out what it takes to meet legislated educational standards and to provide a quality education, set aside sufficient cash on a regular basis, and fix funding inequities among districts.

With NEA media and research assistance, the **Nebraska State Education Association (NSEA)** is working to educate voters and state legislators why A&E's time has come. Nebraska schools, hard hit by recent state cutbacks, deserve a rational funding mechanism, argues NSEA Executive Director Jim Griess. "Nebraska has never done an official study costing out the needs of schools," he says. "Funding is now based only on political expediency."

Big Boost for Arkansas Kids

ARKANSAS The **Arkansas Education Association** worked with legislators to raise sufficient revenue and appropriate the largest increase in school funding in more than 25 years. Under the school funding act alone, the state will boost education funds this school year to approximately $391.5 million.

More Good Budget News

CALIFORNIA The **California Teachers Association (CTA)** reported passage of a 2004–05 budget that boosts K–14 spending by more than $2 billion from current levels and includes full funding for class size reduction and special education.

There's still pain in this budget, says CTA President Barbara E. Kerr, "but I congratulate the governor and legislature for compromising and passing a state budget that provides cost-of-living and student growth increases for all K–12 schools and community colleges."

Nevada at a Breaking Point

NEVADA **Nevada State Education Association (NSEA)** members are campaigning for a November ballot initiative to make the state's annual per-pupil expenditure "equal or exceed" the national average. Nevada now ranks 45th in school funding, says NSEA Executive Director Ken Lange. "We want to ensure that classrooms crowded to the breaking point and teachers overextended to the breaking point are given priority in the legislature."

Superintendent Sent Packing

NEW MEXICO Teacher and ESP members of the **Roswell Education Association** worked with their community to successfully force the ouster of Superintendent Manny Rodriguez, who, among other things, made "demeaning and degrading" remarks to employees and prompted "many quality educators and staff to leave," reports UniServ consultant Andres Becerra.

Some 600 Roswell district staffers signed a no-confidence petition and backed a community-wide drive to send Rodriguez packing. It all came to a head at a July 27 school board meeting, where 18 administrators made it clear they'd quit if the board didn't discharge the superintendent "for cause" on a variety of malfeasance charges. The board then voted to accept Rodriguez's resignation.

When Teachers Stand Up for Kids

Can teachers be punished for protesting discrimination against students? The federal courts weigh in.

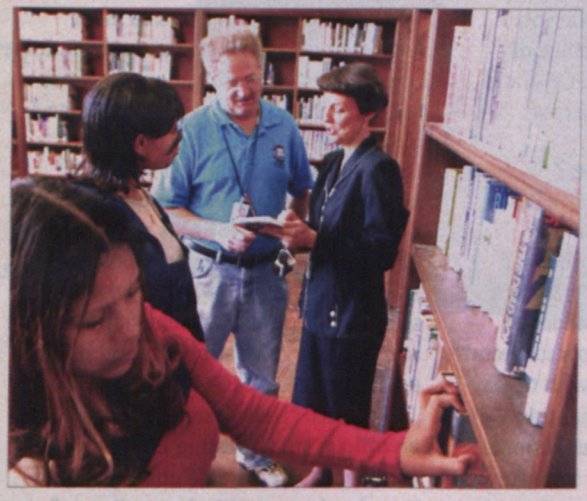
When Pamela Settlegoode realized that her special needs students weren't getting a fair shake, she did what any decent teacher would do. She spoke up.

Unfortunately, it cost Settlegoode her job—until a jury stepped in and made things right.

Settlegoode, who was a first-year teacher in the Portland (Oregon) Public Schools, conducted physical education classes for students with disabilities in several district schools. Alarmed about the conditions under which she had to teach, she wrote to school administrators complaining that the facilities, materials, and equipment she was required to use often were inadequate and unsafe.

Settlegoode warned that the district might be in violation of federal disability law and compared the district's mistreatment of her students to the discrimination once suffered by African-American students who were forced to take "a back seat on the American School bus."

A jury later found that the district refused to renew her contract in retaliation for her complaints and that the reprisal violated her First Amendment rights. As compensation for her loss, the jury awarded Settlegoode a stunning $952,000 in damages. And the Ninth Circuit Court of Appeals upheld the verdict in a landmark decision handed down in June. "Teachers are uniquely situated to know whether students are receiving the type of attention and education that they deserve and...are federally entitled to," the Court wrote. It went on to emphasize that it is particularly important that teachers of special needs students be free to speak out because they may be "the only guardians of these children's rights and interests during the school day."



"TEACHERS ARE UNIQUELY situated to know whether students are receiving the type of attention and education that they deserve and...are federally entitled to."
—NINTH CIRCUIT COURT OF APPEALS

In a similar case, Decoma Love-Lane, an assistant principal in Winston-Salem, North Carolina, sued her school superintendent, claiming that he demoted her in retaliation for complaining about racially discriminatory discipline practices at her school.

Love-Lane had frequently voiced her concern that a disproportionate number of African-American males were being sent to the "time-out room" where they were denied any instruction. The superintendent allegedly responded that it was "not her job to worry about the children;...it was her job to please her principal."

Reversing a trial court ruling, the Fourth Circuit Court of Appeals said earlier this year that Love-Lane's comments were protected under the First Amendment. It is perfectly proper, the court ruled, for a teacher to advocate on behalf of an "underprivileged student" who's been "warehoused in a time-out room," because "[t]his student has been abandoned at the end of the road unless someone, like Love-Lane, is able to speak up for him."

In yet another case, Roderick Jackson, the former head coach of a girls' high school basketball team in Birmingham, Alabama, sued his school district, claiming he was removed as coach for complaining that his girls' team had been denied equal funding and equal access to sports facilities and equipment in violation of Title IX. That's the federal law that bars gender discrimination and requires public schools to provide girls with an equal opportunity to participate in sports.

Jackson represented himself in the lawsuit and failed to raise a First Amendment claim. Instead, he argued that the district's reprisal violated his rights under Title IX. The Eleventh Circuit Court of Appeals dismissed his case, holding that he couldn't sue under Title IX because he himself was not the victim of sex discrimination.

In June, the Supreme Court agreed to hear Jackson's case and will decide whether a coach or other school employee who endures retaliation for complaining about gender discrimination suffered by others has the right to sue the school district under Title IX. In August, NEA filed an amicus brief on Jackson's behalf, and the case will be argued in December. A decision in the case is not expected until next spring.

—MICHAEL D. SIMPSON
NEA Office of General Counsel

PHOTO: NATHAN HAM

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Great Public Schools for Every Child

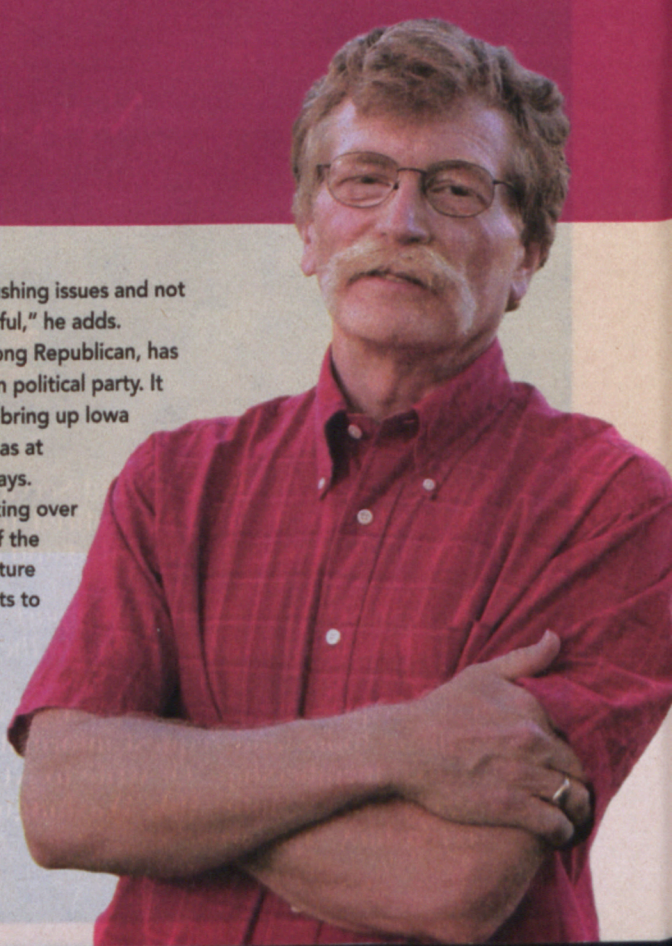
RESPECT

"THERE IS NOT ONE EDUCATOR WHO WANTS ANY CHILD TO FAIL. NOT ONE," says Deborah Broxton of Fernandina Beach, Florida. "Treat us like the professionals we are."

Broxton teaches in an alternative program for some of the toughest high school students, many of them violent, in North Florida. And she sums up the feelings of many NEA members after two years of being told that tens of thousands of public schools are failing—and that the problem lies largely with them.

It's not the kind of news that inspires, but then good news about educators seems in short supply of late. Truth is, these are not feel-good times. The revamped Elementary and Secondary Education Act, the so-called No Child Left Behind law (NCLB), spurred not just a reexamination of how America educates its children, but lots of soul searching among educa-

"Really poor teachers?!"



RESPECT Dennis Linn doesn't think he's a failure. And yet, this summer, the Iowa math teacher received a national Republican Congressional Committee-sponsored poll in his mailbox asking him, "Why is public education failing?"

"They listed a bunch of reasons [to check off] but the one that really got to me was, 'Really poor teachers,'" Linn recounts. His response: "If you keep taking money out of the public education system in your belief that it has already failed, then it really is going to fail."

This latest mailing from the nation's capital affirms for Linn that educators have become the Rodney Dangerfields of professional America. They get "no respect"—and worse, to use the language of his kids at Pella High School, they're "dissed" by those who should model the nation's values.

Take the No Child Left Behind law: When it transfers power from local schools to federal offices, that's disrespectful, he says. "Pushing issues and not funding them—that's disrespectful," he adds.

In recent years, Linn, a lifelong Republican, has felt that disrespect from his own political party. It has become near impossible to bring up Iowa State Education Association ideas at Republican state caucuses, he says.

And so, after 31 years working over math equations, Linn wonders if the current variables add up to a future in teaching. It's not that he wants to retire, but he wonders if public schools can survive the current attitude of disdain. Even when citizens want more money put in schools, elected officials refuse.

"They say 'No, that's not our agenda.'"

Educators have endured budget cuts, attacks on their qualifications, and a law that shortchanges kids and schools. Now as Election Day approaches, they want to know: Will they ever get the respect they deserve?

BY MARY ELLEN FLANNERY, SABRINA HOLCOMB, AND ALAIN JEHLEN

tors about how politicians regard them. Do politicians really understand the struggles of educators? Do they appreciate educators' commitment to one of the most challenging jobs in America?

As the nation stands poised to pick a new President, NEA members are not so sure. When asked in an NEA poll last May what education issues were most important to them in this election, "respect" trumped the list, followed by the closely related issue: fixing NCLB. It's a law many members say is based on the notion that they won't do their jobs without Washington standing over their shoulders telling them who, when, and what to test; how to grade the tests; and what punishments they will suffer when students fall short.

"There's total disrespect from the federal level," said a Pennsylvania teacher. "It's as if the last people in the world you would ask to figure out how to help kids learn are the teachers."

Fueling that feeling of rejection, members say, is an apparent disregard for the complicated social issues that make learning—and parent involvement—so difficult, and a resistance to paying for higher professional salaries and smaller classes.

"I have a class of 45 kids trying to learn with 12 special ed kids in there. How is that even remotely possible?" said a young teacher from Las Vegas, Nevada. "I've turned into a babysitter."

Those who suffer most are students, members say. Discussing the impact of burgeoning testing requirements, one teacher reported, "I have kindergartners and first graders saying, 'I'm stupid.' That's heartbreaking."

Whichever candidate they support, members want our next President to hear and respect their firsthand knowledge of education.

HERE ARE SOME OF THEIR VOICES.

The para test: judging what?

RESPECT Terri Prough wants the President of the United States to come see her.

Prough, a special education paraprofessional in LaPlace, Louisiana, a suburb of New Orleans, has invited several politicians to visit her class, but none has shown up.

If the President came, she says, "he would realize these children have serious problems. He would learn that we do a lot more than the people in Washington think we do. They think we're stupid. They think they wrote the book on special education, but they know nothing about it."

Prough took the ParaPro test to comply with the so-called No Child Left Behind law. The test covered reading, writing, and math, but "nowhere did it ask me what I should do with the child who eats chalk, bugs, or anything else he can shove in the mouth, or the emotionally disturbed child who throws chairs at other students."

Prough knows that paras, especially at the high school level, do need academic skills. "Of course you need an education, but not college-level. A high school diploma should be enough," she says.

"Let every school district evaluate their paras by observing them in the classroom. Does the para treat the children with respect, and follow through with the teacher's instructions? Is the para dedicated enough to want to come back year after year, and willing to do the extra dirty work?"

The testing, says Prough, is a waste of money. "Let them spend that money on classes for us about how to work with special education kids."

PHOTO LEFT: STEVE POPE; RIGHT: CHERYL GERBER

Left behind in language limbo

FAIRNESS Jeanne Sanchez-Bell has students from Mexico, Pakistan, Guatemala, Colombia, Japan, Turkmenistan, and all corners of the non-English-speaking world. They come to her Mary D. Bradford High School classroom in Kenosha, Wisconsin, with little English and spotty school histories.

Some will disappear quickly to work in local factories or care for younger siblings at home. Others will stay and, after a couple years of classes, can ask for directions to the bathroom and navigate simple books. At that point the so-called No Child Left Behind law will demand that they take and pass standardized reading and math tests in English.

"It's just impossible," exclaims Sanchez-Bell.

While her kids may understand how plants rely on sunshine to grown and breathe, they've no idea how "autotrophic life forms" use "electromagnetic radiation" during "photosynthesis." Even after an overdue revision this year, NCLB still expects immigrant students to perform as well as their native-born peers. When they fail, so do their teachers and schools.

To Sanchez-Bell, a second-generation American and fluent Spanish-speaker, the federal education law desperately needs fixing (and funding).

Regular rulers won't work

FAIRNESS When Michelle, an eighth-grader in Hillsboro, Oregon, first came to Raymond A. Brown Middle School, she was sweet and even-tempered—and still is—but, because she was different from most of her classmates, she didn't have any friends.

Now, despite a cognitive disability, she plays cards with buddies, has company at lunch, and even goes to sleepovers. She's ready for high school, says Michelle's case manager, Patty Craig, while wiping tears from her eyes.

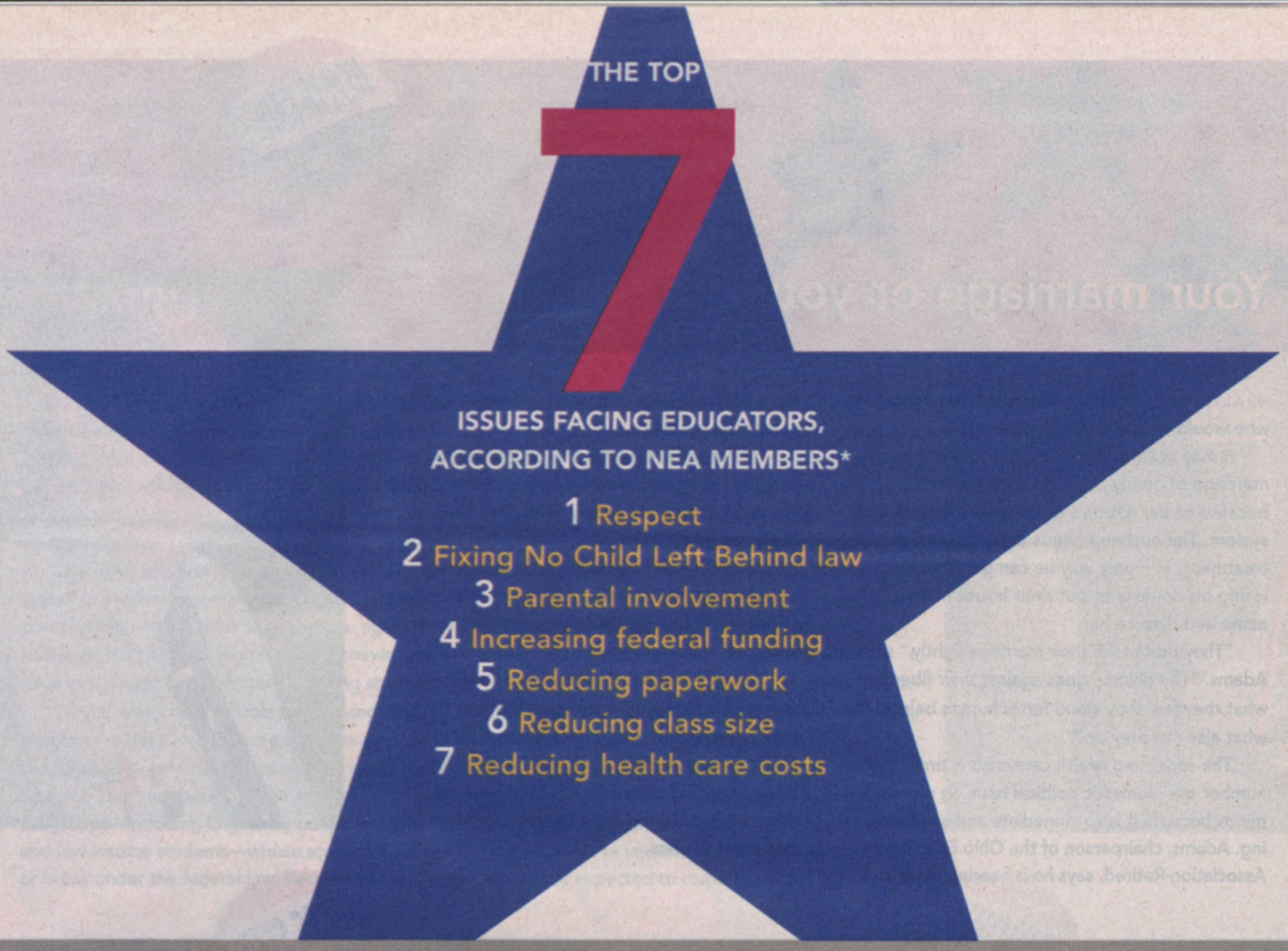
Of course, that kind of progress won't be noted by any measure of the No Child Left Behind law. A special education student's ability to make friends, use the bathroom, or focus on a teacher can't be measured by standardized tests.

And it's not that tests are bad, Craig says. "I'd like to see us continue to give tests that are appropriate to kids, but make the focus their own progress at their own level," she adds.

Since Craig began her career 12 years ago, it seems testing has been stealing more and more instruction time from her kids. Each student requires about seven hours of individualized testing—multiply that by 10 and you've lost two weeks. At the same time, class sizes have skyrocketed and support services have been cut.

It makes her angry that citizens—from the White House to the neighbor's house—don't seem to realize these burdens. "People in my building are competent and professional and you'd be amazed at the number of cars here at 10 p.m.," Craig says. "But this is compromising my ability to do my job."

PHOTO TOP: PETER ZUZGA; BOTTOM: CRAIG MITCHELLDYER

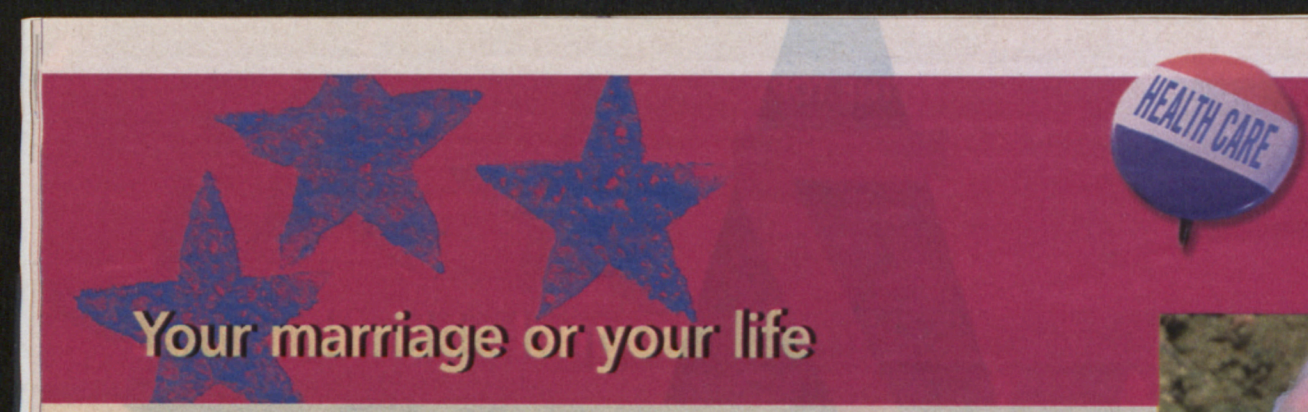


KERRY VS. BUSH HOW THE CANDIDATES STACK UP

Last July, 86.5 percent of the delegates to the 2004 NEA Representative Assembly voted to recommend John Kerry for President. Here are some of the reasons:

	President Bush	Senator Kerry
No Child Left Behind: Adequate Yearly Progress rules	Backs the current law that punishes public schools if even one group of students does not show 95 percent attendance for the required standardized test, or if one group does not meet escalating test score requirements.	Opposes judging schools by their students' test scores. Would work to change this central provision of the law to "empower teachers to teach and not have to teach to the test."
No Child Left Behind: Highly Qualified Teacher rules	Supports the current law.	Opposes the provision that ignores long and successful teaching experience in determining whether a teacher is qualified.
Vouchers	Strongly supports publicly funded private school vouchers.	Opposes vouchers and has never voted for them.
Federal funding	His 2005 budget drastically underfunds both No Child Left Behind by $9.4 billion and special education by $10.5 billion. His budget projections call for education spending cuts after the presidential election is over.	Supports full funding for No Child Left Behind. Has consistently voted for full funding of special education as well.
Health insurance	Has done little to reduce either the cost of health insurance or the number of uninsured Americans, which has grown to nearly 45 million.	Would expand health care to all children and to nearly 95 percent of Americans.

* NEA MEMBER SURVEY, MAY 2004



Your marriage or your life

HEALTH CARE Homer Adams wants a President who would save his friends' marriage.

It may seem a lot to ask, but in this case, their marriage of nearly 50 years is on the rocks because of our nation's dysfunctional health care system. The husband needs expensive medical treatment. The only way he can get it without losing his home is to put their house in his wife's name and divorce her.

"They don't take their marriage lightly," says Adams. "The divorce goes against their fiber and what they feel they stand for as human beings. But what else can they do?"

The escalating health care crisis is probably the number one domestic political issue on retirees' minds because it is so immediate and so threatening. Adams, chairperson of the Ohio Education Association-Retired, says he is hearing more and more personal tales of financial disaster because of medical problems.

He himself is diabetic and, in the last two years, his drug co-payments have ballooned from about $7 a month to nearly $100. The new Medicare prescription drug benefit was supposed to help, but Adams finds the drug companies have boosted prices enough to more than make up for the discounts. So Adams and his friends are worse off than before.

"It galls me that the new law specifically forbids Medicare from trying to bargain those high prescription drug prices down," he says. The Veterans Administration negotiates low drug prices for veterans, but Medicare, he fumes, is prohibited from bargaining lower prices for seniors.

Lab rats get more room

CLASS SIZE There's such a thing as too many living organisms in the petri dish that science teacher Lyn Slygh calls her classroom. When it gets crowded—38 students!—she has to change the way she cultivates little minds.

Fire is out. Instead of asking students to sterilize equipment over a flame, the Lake Worth High School veteran buys expensive pre-sterilized equipment. Gas is out. Sadly, even microscopes are difficult to manage. (Try this problem: 38 kids divided by 24 electrical outlets.)

Slygh, who was voted Florida's best biology teacher by her peers this year, isn't about to let the kids suffer. While her colleagues switch to worksheets, she spends more time on preparation and clean-up, and moves faster.

"All their hands are up and I'll just systematically go around and say, 'You're just going to have to wait, I'll be there eventually,'" she says.

To grade papers and prepare labs, she arrived to school last year at 8 a.m. and left 10 hours later. Her largest Advanced Placement class wasn't bad, but younger kids... "The bigger the class is, the more kids think they can get away with."

Come November, class size—an investment she says would pay off—will be one of the many issues on Slygh's mind. (Don't get her started on testing. Kids don't learn to think anymore, she says.)

"You put a rat in a lab cage and they've got better conditions," she says. "You can only put so many rats in each cage, and then you regulate the temperature and fix things when they break."

PHOTO TOP: SANDY SCHAEFFER; BOTTOM: D.J. MEEKS

Making do

FUNDING During the winter months, many of the kids in Vaughn Spencer's eighth-grade social studies classroom wear their coats inside because the boilers aren't always working. By August, the same kids are sweltering because the school can't afford air-conditioning.

Like many urban schools, Southern Middle School in Reading, Pennsylvania, has a scarcity of commodities and a surplus of challenges: aging buildings, lack of funds, high teacher turnover, and a large percentage of non-English-speaking students.

"Right now, urban schools are carrying the weight of NCLB because we're the ones who lack the funds but who have the numbers," says Spencer. The "numbers" are the student subgroups—including English-language learners and low-income students—whose scores are make or break under the federal law. Because of their low scores, Spencer's school and five others locally have been targeted by NCLB. In response, the district has filed a suit against the state, claiming that it has an unfair burden compared to surrounding suburban districts.

"The irony is that NCLB is hurting the very kids it was supposed to help," says Spencer. "We no longer have the time to introduce our kids to experiences outside of their daily environment—experiences their suburban counterparts take for granted."

Activities at Southern Middle School now center on raising test scores. Teachers have fewer planning periods and there is little or no time for field trips or the interactive projects the students love and that help make the curriculum meaningful to them.

"We're the second poorest school district in the state and we're underfunded," says Spencer, "but we're still expected to come through."

Not worth a dime?

FUNDING Minneapolis English teacher Opal Ehalt is in the front ranks of the fight to "leave no child behind," and she's wondering why the President wants to cut her loose. Ehalt works with students who are as likely to be left behind as anyone—teen parents, 80 percent of them on public assistance, many from families that have been on welfare for generations.

Her project is funded by one of the 38 education programs zeroed out in the Bush Administration education budget for next year. The Administration tried to ax it this year, but Congress restored half of the money.

Ehalt says many of her students' families move frequently, so they disappear from school records. Under the so-called No Child Left Behind law, there's an incentive for schools not to find them because they might drag down a school's test scores.

But she and her colleagues simply won't give up on these students. One strategy is to connect school and work, making school directly relevant to the students' lives. For example, there's a chef training project in which students cook for the soup kitchen run by the church next door.

Ehalt is adding a high-tech strand to the program, putting courses online, adding chat rooms, and teaching 21st century computer skills.

"One of my girls designed her own Web page including music. She's headed for college," Ehalt reports. The federal dollars in this program do double duty because each young mom pulled out of poverty brings her baby along with her.

So how about some help?

PHOTO TOP: STACY EDMONDS; BOTTOM: ALAN SMITH

'Who Me? An Activist?'

BY MARY ELLEN FLANNERY

You say you're no politico. You say you're too late to help. You say it all sounds like a big fat drag. Not true! The campaign trail is a long one, but NEA members can give their candidates a little crutch and cradle at any point along the way. Your colleagues can be your inspiration—they have fantastic ideas, big and small, and more fun than you might imagine!

You can't vote if...

You're not registered! So make sure your voter registration is current and, while you're at it, take care of your colleagues too. Member Kathleen Tierney of Long Beach, California, plans to stop by every room in her elementary school with a stack of registration forms in hand and "give them a little nudge," she says. Helping high-school students register also would be dynamite, she adds, urging, "Let's get young people involved in the political process."

Activism for the introvert

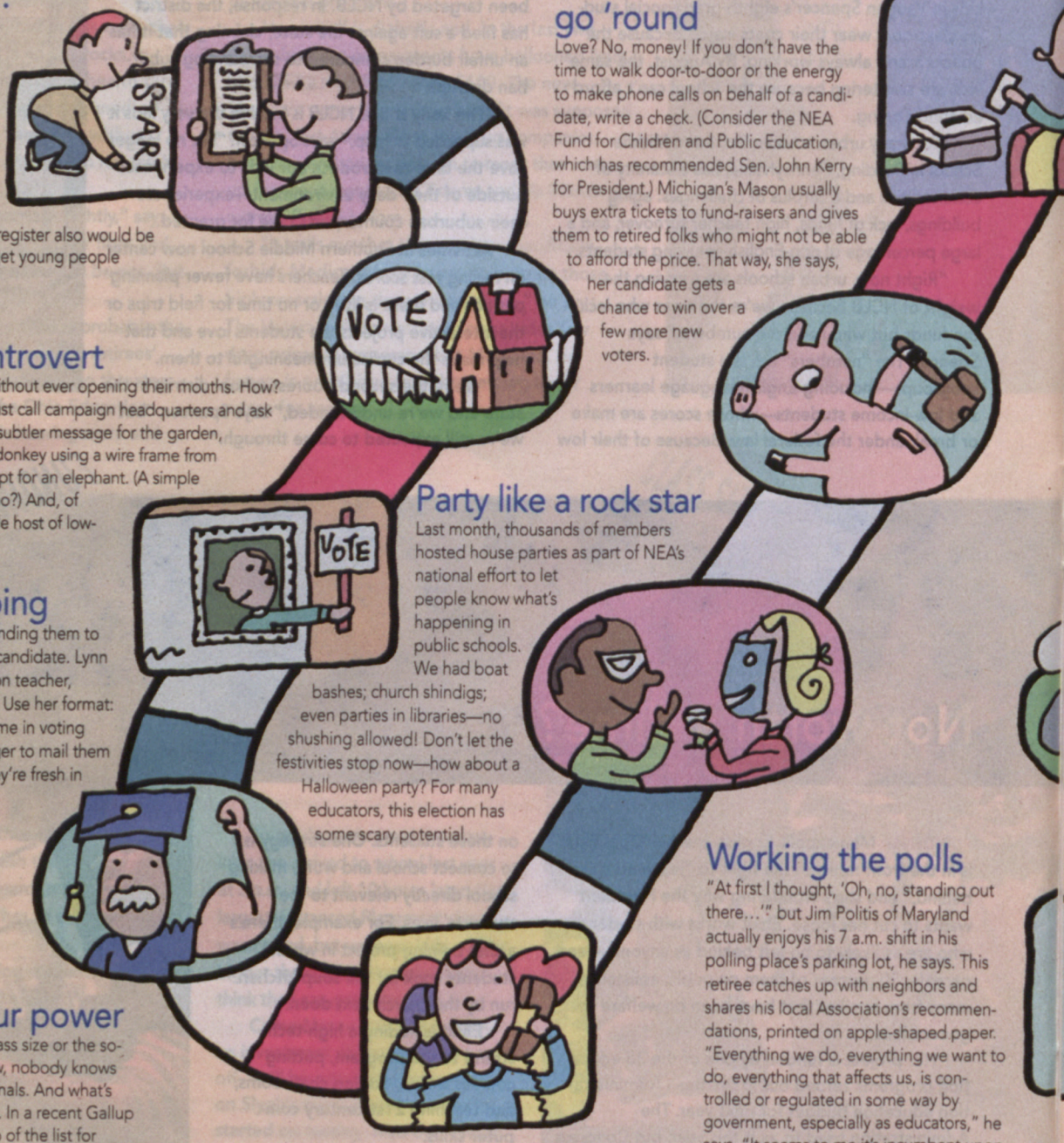
Some members will have their say without ever opening their mouths. How? A political sign in their front yards. Just call campaign headquarters and ask for a drop-off. If you're looking for a subtler message for the garden, Democrats can grow a two-foot-tall donkey using a wire frame from eTopiary.com, while GOP folks can opt for an elephant. (A simple "bush" may be a little too esoteric, no?) And, of course, Green Party fans have a whole host of low-key choices.

More silent stumping

Send postcards to your friends, reminding them to vote and making your case for your candidate. Lynn Mason, a Michigan physical education teacher, already has filled out more than 100. Use her format: "Dear so-and-so, I'd like you to join me in voting for..." Then ask the campaign manager to mail them a few days before the election so they're fresh in people's minds.

Understand your power

When it comes to issues like class size or the so-called No Child Left Behind law, nobody knows more than education professionals. And what's more, voters trust your opinion. In a recent Gallup poll, teachers ranked at the top of the list for trustworthiness, better than doctors, clergy, judges, police officers, and the President.



It makes the world go 'round

Love? No, money! If you don't have the time to walk door-to-door or the energy to make phone calls on behalf of a candidate, write a check. (Consider the NEA Fund for Children and Public Education, which has recommended Sen. John Kerry for President.) Michigan's Mason usually buys extra tickets to fund-raisers and gives them to retired folks who might not be able to afford the price. That way, she says, her candidate gets a chance to win over a few more new voters.

Party like a rock star

Last month, thousands of members hosted house parties as part of NEA's national effort to let people know what's happening in public schools. We had boat bashes; church shindigs; even parties in libraries—no shushing allowed! Don't let the festivities stop now—how about a Halloween party? For many educators, this election has some scary potential.

Working the polls

"At first I thought, 'Oh, no, standing out there...'" but Jim Politis of Maryland actually enjoys his 7 a.m. shift in his polling place's parking lot, he says. This retiree catches up with neighbors and shares his local Association's recommendations, printed on apple-shaped paper. "Everything we do, everything we want to do, everything that affects us, is controlled or regulated in some way by government, especially as educators," he says. "It seems to me it's incumbent upon us to share our expertise."

Ring, ring, ring

Washington state teacher Fern Tresvan plans to do "whatever the campaign bosses want me to do" during this election season. Working the phones is a common campaign chore that may sound intimidating, but isn't, Tresvan says. "My whole approach is, the worst that anybody can say is, 'I'm not interested,' and I don't take that personally," she says. "You've just got to make contact with people."

ILLUSTRATION: STUART GOLDENBERG

Poor Aunt Shirley

With her hip, she can't get out of the house. Help her get an absentee ballot by calling or writing the local elections office so she can cast her ballot from the comfort of her La-Z-Boy. Unless Shirley has a specific disability that makes it impossible for her to read or write, she must do the voting herself. But make sure she signs it!

Meet the candidates

Two years ago, Iowa reading teacher Roberta Hass called up local candidates and invited them to speak to her colleagues in Clayton County. This year, she plans to host another Candidates Night and extend the invitation to the general community. "Maybe this year we can have a little debate," she muses.

Like a broken record

You think you're talking too much about Bush and Kerry, Bush and Kerry, Bush and Kerry, but you're the only one listening so carefully. Take a lesson from the cell phone companies. In a 1998 national study, researchers found the more people saw or heard a company's advertisements, the more they believed that company's products were tops. So keep it up!

Bagels and ballots

If your school serves as a polling place, invite your colleagues to swing into work early on Election Day and include a little party with your politics. For Kerry fans, check out a New England favorite—hot maple-flavored Maypo cereal. For Bush backers, it'd have to be Texas (definitely not French) toast.

Take a friend!

You wouldn't go to the emergency room alone, would you? But this election may be just as important to your professional health. So take a buddy, or two, or three, or four, to the polls. It'd be especially kind if you considered friends who can't drive themselves. Stop for coffee and doughnuts. Have a little fun.

VOTE!

Find Out More For a handy voter guide on how to assess the education commitment of candidates in any election, contact NEA External Partnerships and Advocacy at 202-822-7446. Or see Resources, page 59.

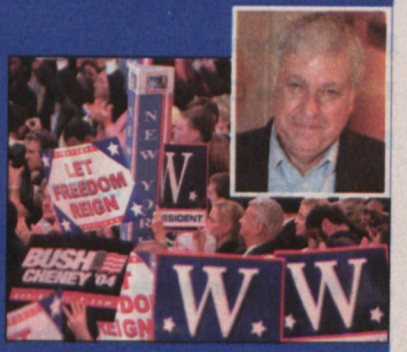
PHOTOS THIS PAGE: SANDY SCHAEFFER

And if THAT'S Not Enough...

You Can Become a Party Person

No, not the kind that parties at the nightclub with a drink in each hand and confetti in the hair. We're talking about the kind that parties at the Republican or Democratic national conventions with a flag in each hand and confetti in the hair. For NEA members Jerry Roe and Karla Bradley, and the thousands of other delegates that attend the RNC and DNC, democracy is a participatory business.

RNC in the House



"Educators are more involved in politics than they've ever been before," says Jerry Roe, an American political systems professor and alternate Michigan delegate to this year's Republican National Convention. "Teachers are out there running for office, serving as precinct delegates, and working on party committees. We have a profound influence, inside and outside of the classroom. The message we give our students is that all Americans have a stake in the political system, no matter what their beliefs."

Roe, who has been active in Republican politics for years, has sage advice for aspiring activists—those who campaign from their couch and computer and those who hit the trail:

IF YOU'RE A HOMEBODY, BE PROACTIVE. Read and watch the news and write letters to the editor and members of the legislature and Congress. Be informed so you can discuss the issues.

IF YOU'RE A BUDDING POLITICIAN, JUMP INTO THE FRAY. Make your voice heard and be a part of the group that makes decisions.

DNC in the House

Karla Bradley, elementary school teacher and First Vice Chair of the Democratic party of Arkansas, wants her fellow educators to know they have more clout than they realize. A super delegate to this year's Democratic National Convention, Bradley enjoyed hearing Senator Kerry's sister, a teacher, speak about education. "Teachers don't realize how important we are politically," says Bradley. "We have the ear of policy makers and the respect of parents."

Bradley believes that educators are the perfect candidates for political activism because a combination of service and idealism is what brings them to the profession. Who has time for political action? you ask. Bradley offers guidance to both ardent and armchair activists:

SUPPORT CANDIDATES YOU REALLY BELIEVE IN. Even if they're not perfect, you have a chance to make them better.

TAKE NOTHING FOR GRANTED—NOT EVEN THE BASICS. Make sure you, your family, your friends, and your co-workers are registered to vote. If possible, cast an early ballot.

—SABRINA HOLCOMB

Politico or Politican't?

Is the American political season better than springtime in Paris? Or do you think all the fuss is just a lot of phooey? Take our *NEA Today* quiz to measure your passion for pols.

T or F

- You've bought extra televisions so you can watch ABC, CNN, and Fox simultaneously.
- The White House is that hip store that sells only white clothes.
- You're going trick-or-treating this year in an elephant or donkey suit.
- Who's running for President this year? You're not quite sure but it's on the tip of your tongue.
- The *Congressional Quarterly* is your idea of light summer reading.
- You think Bush, Cheney, Kerry, and Edwards are a folk group from the '60s.
- You're serving Boston baked beans with every meal until November.
- The comics are still your favorite part of the paper.
- You can name all of the Kerry/Heinz/Bush/Edwards/Cheney offspring.
- You think your neighbors with political yard signs must be fanatics.
- In bed at night, you whisper sweet nothings about the presidential campaign into your loved one's ear.
- You know just how you'd redecorate the Oval Office and the First Family's living quarters.

Give yourself one point for every red answer:

(0 TO 3) Sitter outer. We should throw your morning tea in the harbor and start you off again on the right foot. Democracy is participatory government!

(4 TO 8) One eye open Perhaps a very healthy attitude toward this season's swirling mess of spin and slogans. But don't forget to vote!

(9 TO 12) Campaign junkie We applaud your enthusiasm, even as we wonder how you'll fill your days after November 2. Good job!

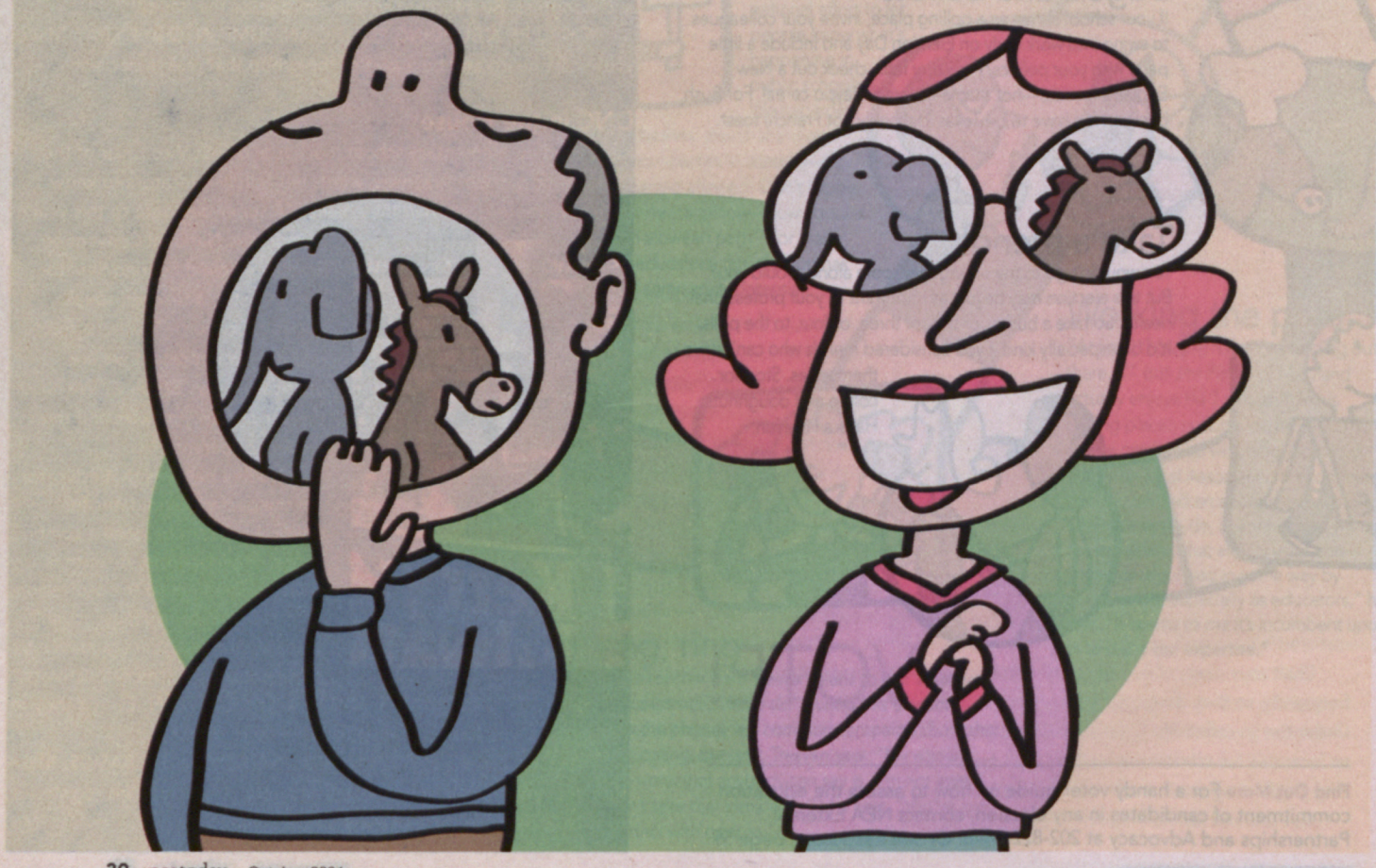


ILLUSTRATION: STUART GOLDENBERG

SCHOOL HOUSE TO STATE HOUSE

Sometimes you think, "If I were in charge..."

BY MARY ELLEN FLANNERY

WELL, WHAT IF YOU WERE CALLING THE POLITICAL SHOTS? "I figure the person who can best represent me is me," says Earnest "Coach" Williams, a physical education teacher—and two-term representative in Georgia's House of Representatives. So go for it! Running for office just takes a little drive, a little cash, and "a friendly smile helps too," Williams says.

Judy Solano was eating at a Benihana restaurant when she realized she couldn't take it anymore. She'd been chatting with a nearby mom about her obviously precocious 6-year-old son, and recalls saying, "He must just love school."

He hates it, the mom told her. His classroom work wasn't creative or engaging—it was just test preparation all day. They fought every morning to get the little guy onto the school bus.

"We're killing the love of lifelong learning," says Solano, a former Colorado fifth-grade teacher and Democratic candidate for Statehouse. "I said, 'Okay, that's it, I'm doing it.'"

This is Solano's first foray into politics—and it's not easy, she admits. There's a lot of self-promotion, which she's getting better at, and a lot of asking folks for money, which she still hates.

Still, Solano believes ordinary teachers have to get involved. "People in the Legislature who don't know anything about education are making decisions for educators. It's time for us to be more politically involved."

ILLUSTRATION: STUART GOLDENBERG; FLAG PHOTO: PHOTODISC

Thirty-plus years after George McGovern's failed bid for the presidency, retired librarian Ted Kneebone remains a fan of his fellow South Dakotan. "McGovern is still a saint....He showed you can win, even if you don't win."

Nonetheless, Kneebone does plan to win, even as he takes on a 10-year Statehouse incumbent in his first run for office. And then, when he gets to Pierre, he plans on making a little noise.

Take the so-called No Child Left Behind law—in fact, take it all the way back to Washington. "It's a vicious, nasty attack on teachers...obviously cooked up by somebody who doesn't know anything about education," he says. "It's time for us to say we don't need the money."

Although his name has never been on the ballot before, Kneebone has been active in Democratic politics for decades. He signed up for the union in 1955, and remembers marching for civil rights with his 8-year-old son a decade later. "When my ox gets gored, I've got to fight back," he says.

You might think the statehouse and schoolhouse are worlds apart. Not true, says Donna Sweaney, an elementary school guidance counselor running for a fifth term in the Vermont Legislature.

"There's not much difference between elementary and the Legislature," Sweaney laughs. "My first impression was these people haven't learned to listen to each other—and that's exactly what I teach the kids to do."

Still, Sweaney understands candidacy can be scary—even after years of local activism, it frightened her too. "Teachers, for the most part, are more introverted. We go into our classrooms and shut the door," she says.

Talk to people with experience, she advises. Accept help from others. When Sweaney first ran, her friends threw a hugely successful Mexican feast to raise cash, she recalls.

In Vermont's Legislature, there are doctors, dentists, lawyers, and loggers, but there should be teachers too. "I can be a voice on the House floor who says, 'Wait a minute, what do you want us to do now? And what do you want us not to do?'"

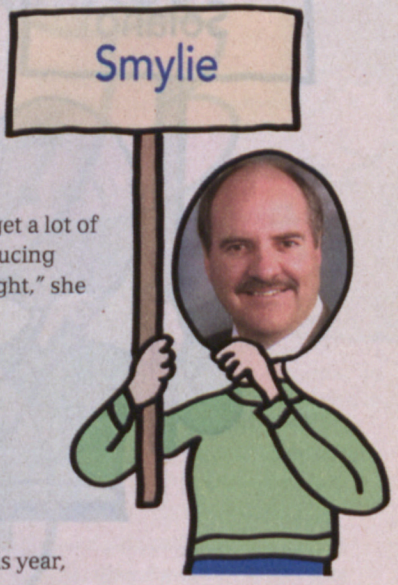
Last year, on the first day of school, fourth-grade teacher Theresa Dudley had 42 kids in her class. After another teacher came on board, she had 29—but lunch still started at 10 a.m. and the media center was constantly overwhelmed, she says.

"When we had our union meeting, I stood up and asked, 'Why are we supporting candidates that do nothing about growth?'" Dudley recalls. Maryland voters deserved an alternative, she decided.

"Democracy is healthy when it's challenged," she says.

For Dudley, that also means taking aim at the No Child Left Behind law, so that it returns some responsibility to parents. "They're hitting us over the head...and then kids show up without their homework. Parents have a job to do too," she says.

Being a Green Party candidate for U.S. Congress doesn't mean you automatically get a lot of that, well, green stuff. But you can campaign cheaply by knocking on doors and introducing yourself in person, she says. And, she hopes, cheap is effective. "Ask me on election night," she says, laughing.



Five years ago, Steve Smylie was sitting at a picnic table, "belly-aching about the latest actions of the Idaho Legislature," when a friend said to him, "Funny, I don't see your name on the ballot."

"Basically, it was put up or shut up," Smylie recalls.

He put up.

Smylie, a junior-high history and Spanish teacher, hopes to keep his seat in Boise this year,

ILLUSTRATIONS: STUART GOLDENBERG

where he's one of seven NEA members in the Legislature. A good run just requires "connections, connections, connections," says Smylie, a Republican and the son of a former Idaho governor.

Being a teacher helps that way, he says. In some neighborhoods, "they all know Mr. Smylie....I can't tell you how many times I've bumped into former students, who've become some of my strongest volunteers."

But at the same time, Smylie is wary of being pigeonholed as "The Teacher," he says. "You're generally not effective if you stand up and say 'I'm speaking for all my fellow teachers.' What I've found is a lot of my colleagues quietly come to me."

When Tammy Starnes picked out signs, she chose an apple and a cute message, "Dedicated to the core." And when she met voters, she gave them packages of Chex Mix that said, "Check the box for Starnes!"

"That was probably a teacher thing," Starnes laughs.

Considering this is her first campaign, it makes sense that Starnes, a former fourth-grade teacher who works for the state education department, still feels more like a teacher than a politician. Soon, she'll also feel like Autauga County, Alabama's newest school board member. With the promise of more equitable hiring and a teacher recognition program, Starnes won the Republican primary in July and faces no more opposition.

"[The campaign] was stressful and hot, but it was actually fun," Starnes says. Like most teachers, she's comfortable "talking to whomever," and cash wasn't a big issue after family members chipped in for the $2,500 campaign.

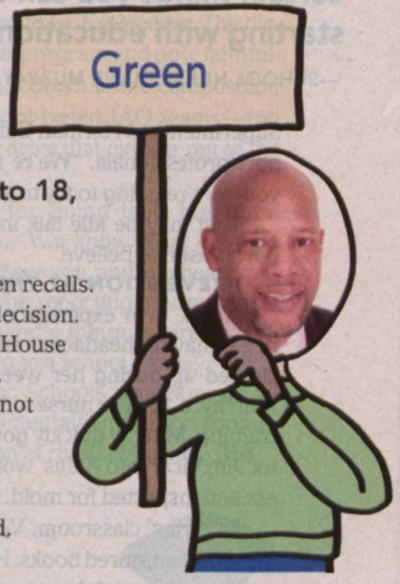
Now Starnes hopes she inspires other teachers to run. "I hope educators see this and won't be fearful about standing up for themselves."

Dale Stephens has driven a school bus for 25 years, which is also about the length of his political career. He first ran for office at the advanced age of 24.

"I lost by 97 votes and then I ran again and lost by six votes. And then I swore I'd never do it again," Stephens chuckles. And yet, here he is, shaking hands with John Kerry at Jim's Spaghetti House, talking to local vets at the VFW Post, and hoping to regain the Statehouse seat he lost two years ago.

The tireless activist knows firsthand the effect of state budgets on local finances—teachers here haven't had a raise in two years—and he can throw in a savvy two-cents on educational and workplace issues.

Still, it's not easy. During his first year in office, he spent 134 days in the Capitol. "Do you have family? Business obligations?" he asks. It's a part-time job that doesn't feel like one—but his school-district employer often appreciates his role. "They know I'll sit down with them."



It took four or five years, but Connecticut State Rep. Ken Green finally convinced his colleagues in 2001 to boost the dropout age to 18, making it more difficult for his students to disappear without their diplomas.

"They weren't seeing the future. They were saying, 'I'm 16 and I'm outta here,'" Green recalls. But now, with few exceptions, they're forced to grow more mature before making that decision.

When you're a school social worker like Green, you bring real-life experience to the House floor. "It's not research that I've done or statistics I've gathered, it's my real life," he says.

Offering that perspective "is our civic responsibility," says Green, a Democrat. And, not only that, it shows students that activism is appropriate.

This year, Green has a few new battles. For one thing, the state needs to do more to encourage diversity among teachers—like a program to help classroom aides pay for college, says Green. For another, money for educational programs needs to be protected, he vows. nea

Breathing *Easier* In Beaufort County

A South Carolina local affiliate and district tackle indoor air quality concerns through mutual trust and lots of communication.

BY DAVE WINANS

If Stuart Akins had complained in years past about poor indoor air quality (IAQ) in her Beaufort County (South Carolina) high school, she'd have been deafened by the silence. Fact is, laments this family and consumer science teacher, nobody in her building "would say or do anything" about IAQ-related ailments back then.

Disorganization and downright fear kept this dirty little issue under the rug. In the Beaufort of old, there was simply no way to successfully file an IAQ complaint, recalls Akins' school nurse, Diane Murray. And edgy educators, she says, would think, "I'm going to get the schedule from hell next year if I complain."

Today, fear is being phased out in Beaufort County, an 18,000-student district in the heart of a non-bargaining, "right-to-work" state. And the Beaufort County Education Association (BCEA) has been at the center of the transformation, striving over the years to build a working relationship with top administrators based on trust and communication.

"If you've got a problem, you can bring it straight to us," Superintendent Herman Gaither likes to say to teachers and support professionals. "We're not going to take you out and flog you—we're going to try to address it as quickly as possible."

That may be idle talk in some places, but for Akins there's now reason to believe.

"IN HUMID CLIMATES, like ours, you're never going to be rid of mold. But there are certain things you can do, starting with education."

—SCHOOL NURSE DIANE MURRAY

PREVENTION AT THE SOURCE

Akins' own experience started last school year, when she began having headaches and sinus problems that miraculously cleared up during her weekends at home. She complained to Murray, a 12-year nurse at Battery Creek High School with IAQ training. Murray quickly got district indoor air quality coordinator Jim Vicar into Akins' work area, where he interviewed teachers and inspected for mold, vermin feces, and carbon dioxide.

In Akins' classroom, Vicar found water stains on carpeting and mold on stored books. He ordered disinfection of the trouble spots, an airing of classroom contents, steam cleaning of the carpeting, and installation of new shelving away from the students.

By year's end, Akins was still dealing with a few symptoms. But unlike with problems in years past, she felt optimistic that things were being fixed. "Now I know there's an end to this," she says with a smile.

What gave her confidence? It's Beaufort's new systemwide approach to dealing with indoor air problems—a system that came about through BCEA persistence and Association-administration cooperation.

INSPECTING FROM EVERY ANGLE

It's a system designed to turn average educators into IAQ watchdogs. Custodian Steve Kennerson, the person who wiped down Akins' furniture with an antimicrobial solution, now has an air quality role that doesn't end with cleaning. He's become part of a Battery Creek school IAQ team—along with a teacher, district and site administrators, nurse Murray, and a parent—that will regularly inspect this huge building with an IAQ checklist from the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA).

And broad-based IAQ teams at Beaufort's 25 other schools—

It Starts with Organizing

South Carolina may be a non-bargaining, right-to-work state, but the Beaufort County Education Association has found the formula for building membership, getting educators involved, and making administrators listen. It's been the key to their success on IAQ problems and more. Just what do they do?

1. EDUCATE. "Our Association is a resource," says local President Bernadette Hampton. In partnership with the South Carolina Education Association, the BCEA promotes classroom management workshops for new teachers and e-mails updates on education legislation to all members. The BCEA even organized a March symposium on the EPA Indoor Air Quality Tools for Schools program, attended by some 130 school stakeholders, from parents to principals.

2. CONNECT. BCEA leaders are rooted in their community and have labored for years to build a relationship with administrators. "We have support from the top of this district and it trickles down to every

PHOTOS: STEPHEN MORTON

Starting this year, indoor air quality (IAQ) teams will conduct "walkthroughs" of each Beaufort County school. Here the Battery Creek High School IAQ team watches district HVAC technical supervisor **John Torrey** as he inspects a dehumidification unit. Looking on, starting clockwise behind Torrey, are biology teacher **Connie Sears**, district IAQ coordinator **Jim Vicar**, custodian **Steve Kennerson**, parent **Carol Murphy**, and assistant principal **Bill Payne**.

each trained last spring by EPA—are gearing up to start similar "walkthroughs." The common goal, spelled out by EPA's IAQ "Tools for Schools" program, is to identify and prevent indoor air pollution at its source through "no-cost or low-cost" solutions.

Vicar, now retired from the district, predicts these workday school tours will be an eye-opener. "You have five or six people on the team all looking in different ways," he says. "The district IAQ coordinator will look from a facility angle, the teacher from an instructional angle, the parent from a safety angle, and the nurse from a health angle."

In the Beaufort of old, once a maintenance worker determined an HVAC filter was clean, the case was closed. But with a walkthrough and a checklist, "it doesn't stop there," stresses Vicar. "You look at filters, you look at coils, you look much deeper into mechanical systems. You actually get up and walk the roofs, looking for leaks and dealing with them."

DRIVING OUT THAT OLD FEAR

Beaufort County actually had made a good start in the last decade when it crafted its own air quality "management plan" and IAQ standards, which require, among other things, standardized equipment and maintenance procedures in new schools and the retrofitting of older structures.

But despite the best district planning, IAQ problems still made folks sick. When residue from a 2002 ductwork cleaning project at Battery Creek High sent some teachers reeling, BCEA President Bernadette Hampton filed a health and safety grievance. "That got our attention," says Superintendent Gaither.

Gaither quickly became open to a long-term IAQ solution, and in late 2003, he authorized Hampton and Murray to attend EPA's annual IAQ Tools for Schools Symposium in Washington, D.C., and agreed—in advance—to implement the lessons they brought home.

At that conference, Hampton, Murray, and South Carolina Education Association UniServ Director Robin Gardner listened to IAQ experts and heard success stories from schools with strong track records of implementing effective IAQ management plans. The experts "told us that in humid climates, like ours, you're never going to be rid of mold," reports Murray, "but there are certain things you can do, starting with education."

The education starts, says Hampton, a Battery Creek math teacher, "with little things that teachers can do to prevent IAQ problems, like not stacking things on their classroom vents."

The next lesson is tailor-made for administrators. "We learned that 80 percent of IAQ can be taken care of for free," notes Gardner. "The minute we told that to Beaufort County administrators, they loosened their ties and breathed a little easier."

The superintendent kept his word to BCEA leaders. The district endorsed EPA's Tools for Schools program and now faithfully follows its recommendations—right down to the composition of Beaufort's district-wide and school-based IAQ teams—and even asked the Association to help it drive that old fear out of the air quality complaint process.

The BCEA's recommendation for doing that: Make the school nurse the IAQ point person. "You know what goes on with the staff, because they come and see you, and you hear from parents," explains nurse Murray. "The reporting mechanism is there and the protocol on how to handle things is already set. Plus, everybody's comfortable talking to a school nurse."

For more on the IAQ Tools For Schools program, go to http://neahin.org/programs/environmental/iaq.htm or contact BCEA President Bernadette Hampton at riveria@islc.net. nea

For more on how Beaufort County is making its schools healthy—and how you can help do the same for yours—go to www.nea.org/neatodayextra.

WWW.NEA.ORG/NEATODAYEXTRA

Checklist for Success

level," says Hampton. "Members call us because they know we have that connection to the district." Superintendent Herman Gaither consults the BCEA before making major policy changes and meets monthly with local leaders. "Everyone brings things to the table. We have the BCEA involved in strategy, even when we talk about the budget," Gaither says. "We explain our budget to them—what's going to be there, what's not, and why. It's opened up a lot of areas of communication between us."

3. LISTEN. BCEA leaders ask folks what's on their mind and "try to draw something from them, especially younger people," says UniServ Director Robin Gardner. And when those educators stew about a workplace problem, they walk right by a competing teachers' group. "There is always somebody at the BCEA who will walk you through the process and will sit next to you if you're on the hot seat," stresses high school English teacher Sandra Davis, a former local president.

4. REACH OUT. The BCEA reaches out to everyone in the education family, from ESPs to education majors at the University of South Carolina-Beaufort. "We encourage our members and 'building contact persons' to invite new educators to become part of the Association," says Hampton. No matter what your education level, adds nurse Diane Murray, "you're important to your school and to our organization!"

Library Lessons

Books still abound, but computers are king. Shhh...Take a tour of today's school library.

BY JOHN O'NEIL

Every so often, just for a few moments, the media center at Yorktown High School in Arlington, Virginia, falls silent. Then the chatter starts up again.

No, it's not kids swapping gossip or planning an after-school jaunt. It's the steady chatter of keyboarding: tap, tap, tap, click, click, tap, tap, tap, tap.

"Before we had computers, if you had come here during lunch you would have heard a lot of voices," notes Lisa Varga, who's served as a library media specialist at Yorktown since 1996. "Now, everything is much quieter because everybody is clicking on a keyboard."

Call it a sign of the times. The card catalog is nearly extinct, and those familiar bound volumes of the *Readers' Guide to Periodical Literature* are fast disappearing from school libraries as well. (You'll find them online). Library shelves bulge with CD-ROMs, videos, DVDs, and audiotapes. And instead of clipping magazines to illustrate their book reports, kids today build multimedia extravaganzas using powerful graphics and presentation software.

Which raises the question: Does anyone in here check out a book anymore?

Rest assured: books remain the mainstay of the school library. According to the most recent survey by the U.S. Department of Education, about 65 percent of the money spent on public school libraries in 1999 went to books, and that number actually increased slightly from the previous study in 1992. The number of books held in the average school library also jumped to more than 10,000.

But school libraries are undergoing seismic shifts with the introduction of new technologies that draw students like moths to a flame—even if it means kids spend less time in the stacks.

Take a tour of the Yorktown High School library with Varga and it quickly becomes clear that the computer is king. The Yorktown media center has 38 of them, and kids are just as likely to have their hands on a mouse as on a book.

The attraction is obvious. With a few keystrokes, students can access the school system's online subscription to dozens of periodicals, scour the holdings of all Arlington County public and school libraries, or cast a query into the broader Internet. They don't even need to be at the library to do it; each kid has a user ID on the school network, and the library loans laptops to students who need one.

On a recent morning, Varga, one of the school's four media specialists, assisted a colleague participating in the Library of Congress' "American Memory" project, which offers teachers and students online access to a rich store of maps, historical documents, photos, and other primary source documents. "Pictures by Civil War photographers, Walt Whitman's poetry, music—it's all on there," says Varga—a veritable digi-topia.

And yet, to see kids rush past the stacks of meticulously chosen and arrayed books to grab the next available computer—well, doesn't it give her pause?

"The tendency is for a student to come in, hop on a computer, type in a topic, and off they go," Varga muses.

"Of course, I love books—that's why I became a librarian—and I think most librarians feel that way," she says. "So it's an ongoing challenge to get students to realize that you can't always go to the Internet first. For some assignments, books are best. We spend a lot of time

Virginia librarian **Lisa Varga** spends more time than ever helping students find what they need on the Internet. But, she adds, "For some assignments, books are best."

PHOTO: SANDY SCHAEFFER

working with the kids on that, and the teachers do, too," often requiring students to balance the use of print and Web resources in their research.

It's partly an issue of quality. Before computers and the Internet, "most librarians didn't add anything to the school library's collection that couldn't be substantiated," notes Kathy Bell, who just retired after 27 years as a school librarian in Florida, and coordinates NEA's Library Media Technology Caucus. Librarians scrutinized booklists of recommended resources, pored through dozens of catalogs of new titles, and spot-checked new materials. With the advent of the Internet, though, libraries opened up. "We don't have control any more of what's in here," Bell says.

That means librarians like Varga must spend more time coaching students on how to evaluate the quality of sources on the Internet. "We tell them, 'when you see something, you have to look at the source,'" says Varga. "'Is it coming from a university or from someone's basement. Who created it?' I'm sure it's seeping in with some of them."

The cut-and-paste ease of Internet research also means school librarians (as well as many teachers) spend hours coaching and cajoling students on the merits of doing original work and the importance of properly crediting sources. In Arlington County, where Varga works, the school system even bought a subscription to turnitin.com so teachers can submit student papers to the online database to check for evidence of plagiarism.

Technology has made her job more complicated, Varga says, but it's also made some of her duties—especially maintaining the media center's collection—much easier. And when a student or teacher presents her with a puzzling research question, why, she's just as likely as the kids to head to her computer. "We're detectives," she says. "There's nothing more rewarding to us than helping someone find an answer." nea

Help in the Library? The Kids Say 'Yes'

More than 13,000 Ohio kids in grades 3–12 took part in the largest-ever student evaluation of the impact of school libraries. Their verdict:

SCHOOL LIBRARIES HAVE HELPED ME TO...

Become more interested in a topic 89%

Get better grades A+ on my assignments 88%

Be more careful about information I find on the Internet 86%

Do my schoolwork better 85%

Put ideas into my own words 82%

Be a better writer 75%

SOURCE: "STUDENT LEARNING THROUGH OHIO SCHOOL LIBRARIES." REPORTED IN *SCHOOL LIBRARY JOURNAL*.

Hot Reads

Yorktown High School librarian Lisa Varga pulls out all the stops to pique students' interest in the library's new books, creating colorful displays and holding occasional "book talks" where she gives capsule summaries of 20 or so treasures. "I read a lot," says Varga, "and if the kids tell me something they've read, I like to steer them to something else they might like."

A FEW OF VARGA'S RECENT FAVORITES FOR YOUNG ADULTS:

Cabot, Meg. *Princess in Love*. New York: HarperCollins, 2002.
A CONTINUATION of the Princess Diaries series, this volume chronicles freshman Mia's life as she prepares to become a princess and live happily ever after with her prince charming.

Card, Orson Scott. *First Meetings in the Enderverse*. New York: Tom Doherty Associates, 2003.
FANS OF *Ender's Game* will enjoy meeting characters from Andrew "Ender" Wiggins' past and learning about events that happened before he saved Earth from destruction.

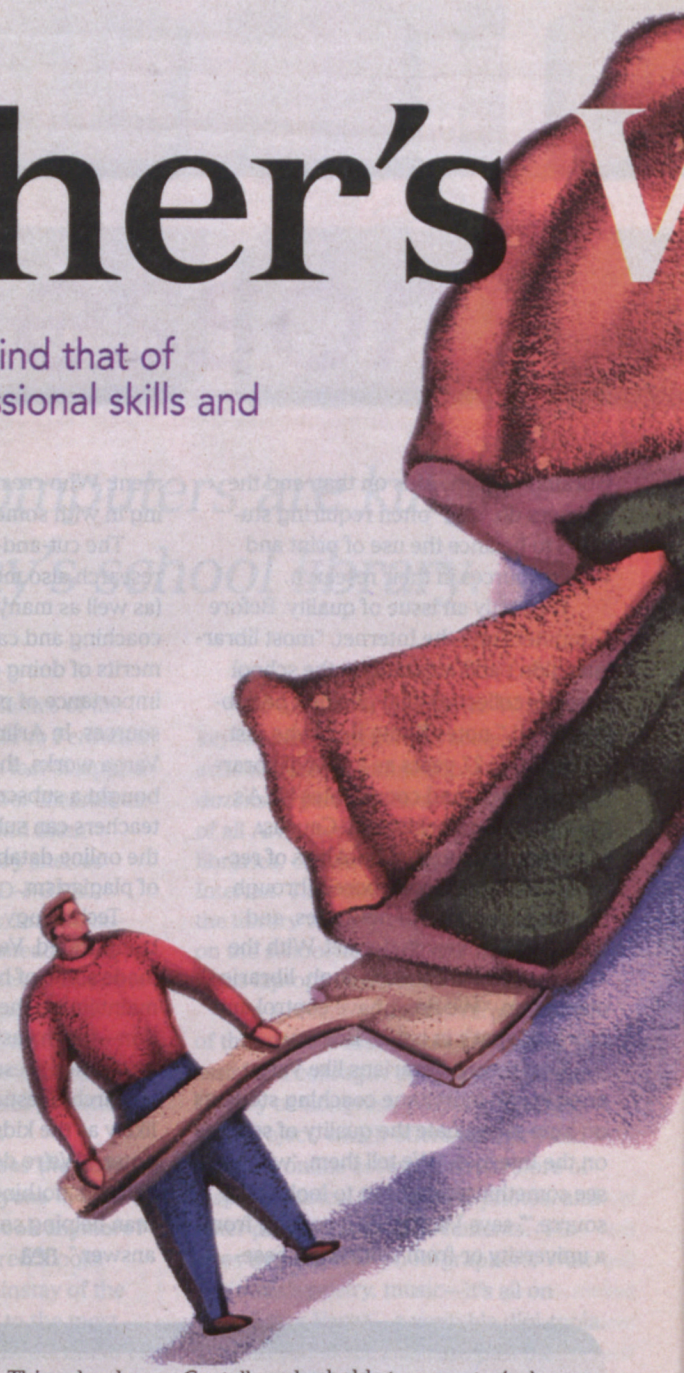
Eleveld, Mark and Mark Smith, eds. *Spoken Word Revolution: Slam, hip hop, and the poetry of a new generation*. Naperville, Illinois: Sourcebooks, 2003.
COMPLETE WITH AUDIO CD, this anthology showcases the work of more than 40 new voices in American poetry.

Johnson, Angela. *The First Part Last*. New York: Simon & Schuster, 2003.
ALTERNATING BETWEEN past and present, 16-year-old Bobby shares his point of view as he struggles being a single-parent dad.

Soto, Gary. *Afterlife*. New York: Harcourt, 2003.
AFTER BEING brutally murdered at his high school dance, senior Chuy observes the events that follow from his vantage point as a ghost.

TEEN READ WEEK IS COMING: **Get ready to get grossed out as the American Library Association supplies a week's worth of shivers and shocks to get teens excited about reading October 17–23, 2004. For book lists, activity ideas, and more on this year's "It's Alive at your library" theme, go to www.ala.org/ala/yalsa/teenreading/trw/trw2004/trw2004.htm.**

A Teacher's W



A new study reveals that teacher pay lags behind that of comparable occupations—even though professional skills and responsibilities are remarkably similar.

BY DAVE WINANS

Sixth-grade English teacher Jack Costello is a guy who lives and breathes his profession—to the point where he'll sneak into his Columbia County (New York) classroom during vacations to do grading, lesson planning, or online research. For Costello and other educators in the semi-rural town of Chatham, teaching is a rigorous "lifestyle" that demands 70-plus-hour workweeks, frequent community contact with parents and students, and lots of workplace responsibility, flexibility, and creativity.

Some Chatham teachers may suspect their complex skills would command a heftier wage in another profession, but Costello knows it for a fact. A decade ago, he was a senior public relations director for a large consumer products firm. "I was responsible for hiring, continual staff development, sales, and customer relations," he says. "If I had stayed there, I would most likely be well into a six-digit salary."

"I'LL ARGUE WITH A TEACHER who says he or she makes 'good money.' I say, 'Compared to what?' Teachers often don't know they could take the same skill set to private industry and double their income!"

—SIXTH-GRADE ENGLISH TEACHER JACK COSTELLO

Truth in Numbers

SINCE 1993, weekly wages for all teachers have fallen behind comparably skilled workers by 11.5 percent and even more—13 percent—for female teachers.

Teachers get less premium pay, less paid leave, and fewer wage bonuses than professionals with similar skills.

Though teachers receive somewhat better health and pension benefits than other professionals, these benefits are partly offset by lower employer payroll taxes because some teachers are not in the Social Security system.

When compared with workers in 16 professions requiring similar skills, teachers earned $116 less per week in 2002, a wage disadvantage of 12.2 percent. Because teachers worked more hours per week, the hourly wage disadvantage is even larger, 14.1 percent.

This school year, Costello, who holds two master's degrees, makes $44,105. While this NEA local affiliate president is proud of his organization's bargaining progress—it wrapped up a three-year contract last spring with annual raises of 5 percent—he knows his 130 members are still playing a grinding game of catch-up while confronting the cruel myth that public educators are glorified babysitters who work fewer hours than other professionals and get better compensation.

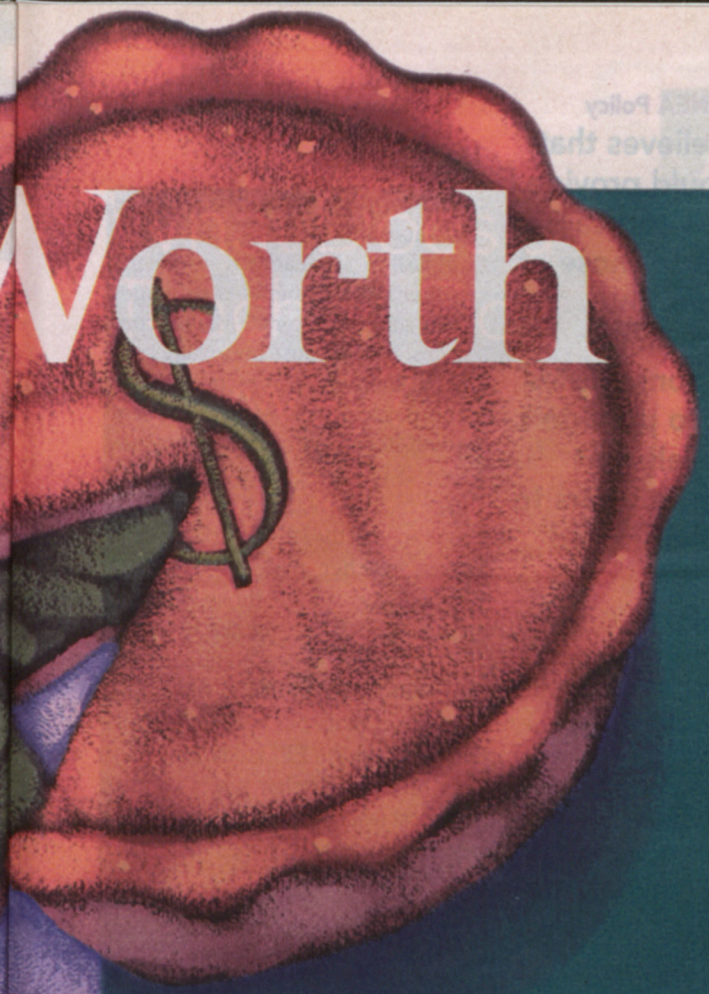
At bargaining, lobbying, or family barbecue time, NEA members such as Costello need solid data to dispel the myth and effectively wage this wage debate. Now, finally, that information is available.

PAY: A TEACHER QUALITY ISSUE

This summer, the Economic Policy Institute (EPI), a nonprofit, nonpartisan think tank in Washington, D.C., released a

continues on page 40

ILLUSTRATION: PHOTODISC



Comparing Apples, Oranges, Peaches, and Pears

What makes one profession more or less 'skilled' than another? The federal government has a measuring tool.

Ever wondered how the experts can rank your profession in comparison with others? Here's a glimpse of the Occupational Leveling Criteria used by the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics in its National Compensation Survey. The BLS gathers a sample of occupations within each surveyed workplace and then tallies up these factors to compute a total skill score for any given profession:

KNOWLEDGE (up to 1,850 possible points) measures the nature and extent of information or facts that the employee must understand to do acceptable work—and the nature and extent of skills needed to apply this knowledge. To count, such knowledge must be "required and applied" on the job.

SUPERVISION received (up to 650 points) covers the nature and extent of direct or indirect controls exercised by the employee's supervisor, the employee's responsibility, and review of completed work. Supervisory duties (0 points) describe the level of supervisory responsibility for a position.

GUIDELINES (650 points) cover the nature of job guidelines—anything from desk manuals to traditional practices—and the individual judgment needed to apply them.

COMPLEXITY (450 points) gauges the nature, number, variety, and intricacy of tasks, steps, process, or methods in work performed; the difficulty in identifying what needs to be done; and the difficulty and originality involved in performing the work.

SCOPE AND EFFECT (450 points) covers the relationship between the nature of the work—such as the purpose, breadth, or depth of the assignment—and the effect of work products or services within and outside the organization.

PERSONAL CONTACTS (110 points) include the employee's face-to-face contacts and telephone/radio dialogue with people not in the supervisory chain. The purpose of these contacts (220 points) range from factual exchanges of information to situations involving significant or controversial issues and differing viewpoints, goals, or objectives.

PHYSICAL DEMANDS (50 points) cover the physical requirements and demands placed on the employee by the work assignment.

WORK ENVIRONMENT (50 points) considers the risks and discomforts in the employee's physical surroundings or the nature of the work assignment and the safety regulations required.

Teaching vs. Comparable Occupations:

	SKILL POINTS*	WEEKLY WAGES**
Accountants and auditors	1,689	$932
Clergy	1,855	699
Computer programmers	1,727	1,171
Editors and reporters	1,711	929
Inspectors and compliance officers (except construction)	1,739	937
Personnel—training and labor relations specialists	1,764	915
Registered nurses	1,769	942
Vocational and educational counselors	1,821	889
Elementary teacher	1,743	811
Secondary teacher	1,757	874
Special education teacher	1,776	820

* SKILL POINTS ASSIGNED ACCORDING TO OCCUPATIONAL LEVELING CRITERIA OF THE NATIONAL COMPENSATION SURVEY. THE NCS IS ADMINISTERED TO EMPLOYERS BY THE BUREAU OF LABOR STATISTICS, U.S. DEPARTMENT OF LABOR.

** AVERAGE WEEKLY WAGES FOR FULL-TIME WORKERS, CURRENT POPULATION SURVEY, BUREAU OF LABOR STATISTICS.

Comparable Pay: It's NEA Policy

"The Association believes that salary schedules should provide for entry-level salaries and career earnings comparable to those of other professions and occupations with similar preparation and responsibilities, and be structured to provide compensation levels that encourage classroom teachers to remain in the classroom and support professionals in the educational setting."

—FROM NEA RESOLUTION F-9

continued from page 38

comprehensive teacher compensation study that found that between 1996 and 2003 inflation-adjusted weekly teacher wages rose just 0.8 percent—far less than the 11.8 percent growth of weekly wages of other college graduates.

Why should the public care? According to Lawrence Mishel, EPI president and a nationally recognized economist, this wage disparity "will make it harder over the long term to maintain and improve teacher quality." Competition from better-paying professions for the best college graduates, he says, is simply too stiff. And as his report notes, public schools no longer can depend on the "captive" female labor pool it once enjoyed.

EPI's findings, based on several statistical analyses of wage data collected by the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS), challenge the argument advanced by some conservative economists that teachers are actually well compensated when work hours, weeks of work, or benefits are taken into account.

"All in all, teachers do have a higher ratio of benefits to wages than other workers," Mishel concedes, "but because non-wage benefits—such as pensions, health care, and payroll taxes—only represent about 20 percent of total compensation, it doesn't change the picture very much of teachers being disadvantaged in the labor market. Moreover, teacher benefits have not grown more than those of other professionals over the last 10 years."

Citing BLS's own National Compensation Survey (NCS), critics also claim that the average teacher makes more per hour than, say, a lawyer or computer programmer. But the EPI study finds that the NCS "greatly understates" average teacher hours worked per week and notes that the typical teacher "spends a good deal more time devoted to her teaching responsibilities" than that required by the collective bargaining agreement.

Too Much To Ask?

Urban Educators Speak Out On Teacher Pay

"I want to teach—it's about loving children and seeing something positive happen in their lives. But in urban districts we need to pay a good starting salary and benefits package or we won't match private industry."

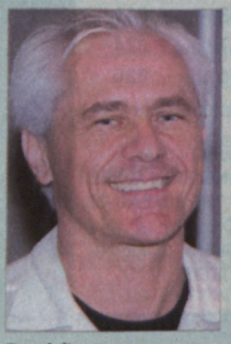
—KINDERGARTEN TEACHER ROBIN C. HOLCOMBE

Passaic, New Jersey, is a high-cost place with a low-income population speaking 22 languages. Even though the Education Association of Passaic has bargained a $40,000 starting teacher salary—like 220 other NEA local affiliates in New Jersey—it's still hard for this district to entice young people into the profession. When it comes to compensation, three Passaic NEA activists have lots to say—about recruitment, retention, and the rigors of teaching:

STEVE BOUDALIS, science teacher, Passaic High School: "I see the right qualities in some of our students for teaching, but when I speak to them about a career in education, they don't want to consider a 'low income' after living in borderline poverty. It's important to give quality students incentives to attract them into the profession—plus it's expensive to live here. Many of our lower-paid people are forced to work second and third jobs, from construction sites to supermarkets."

DONNA MICKOLAJCZYK, remedial reading specialist for seven Passaic schools: "The cost of living is high in this region and the work of Passaic educators becomes more involved all the time. I'm the Reading First coordinator for No Child Left Behind and I'm writing a $1.7 million grant—while being paid on the teacher salary guide. And we've got teachers on 'school leadership teams' who make decisions that top-level people used to make—everything from computing costs in their buildings to examining test data to improve student achievement."

ROBIN C. HOLCOMBE, kindergarten teacher, William B. Cruise Memorial School #11: "A teacher is constantly working, thinking about things, coming up with ideas for lessons, and staying late to get it all done. My paperwork alone has doubled. I constantly deal with parents, and I must make decisions concerning student safety and health and recognize situations that need intervention—by a nurse, an administrator, or a counselor. Teaching is still about loving children, but in urban districts we need to pay a good starting salary and benefits package or we won't match private industry."



Boudalis

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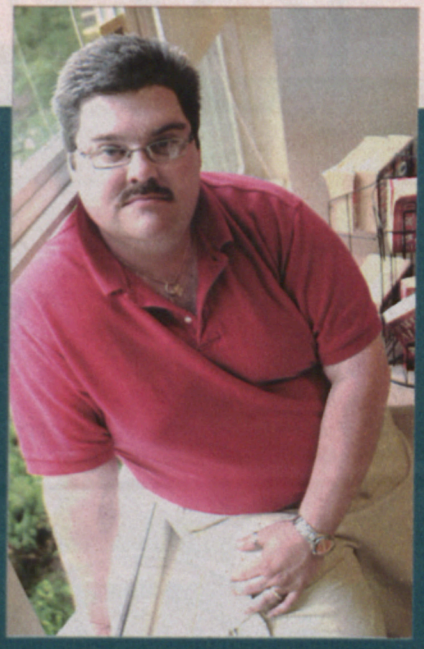
PHOTOS THIS PAGE: CHARLES VOTAW

What Does a Teacher Do, Anyway?



The day-to-day skill requirements are significant, and wildly underestimated. Here's what sixth-grade teacher Jack Costello says he must know and do to be the kind of educator the public demands. Sound familiar?

1. Be knowledgeable in every elementary content area.
2. Meet mandates set by politicians—including standardized testing, student data collection, and continual professional development requirements.
3. Adapt and modify educational programs daily based on individual student needs.
4. Assume daily responsibility for students' emotional and physical well-being.
5. Help every child meet state and federal standards through remediation, intervention, and extra planning.
6. Maintain contact with students and their families outside the school day—while constantly remaining professional.
7. Assume responsibility for dozens of students at a time.
8. Work with little direct supervision.
9. Interpret school district policy and exercise timely independent judgment in a variety of situations.
10. Work outside the regularly scheduled day—during evenings, weekends, and school vacations.

That's hardly a surprise to Jack Costello, who doesn't get home each day before 9 p.m. "I'd love to get even minimum wage for every one of the hours I work," he chuckles. "I'd make a helluva lot more than I do now!"

"I'll argue with a teacher who says he or she makes 'good money,'" adds Costello, "I say, 'Compared to what?' Teachers often don't know they could take the same skill set to private industry and double their income!"

YOUR SKILL IS MY SKILL?

So just how do you compare the work of teaching to other professions? One way is by using something called "occupational leveling," criteria the Bureau of Labor Statistics uses to assign point values to hundreds of different occupations found in workplaces. Among the job factors measured: the knowledge and level of supervision required for a given profession and its demands in terms of complexity, scope and effect of work, and face-to-face contacts with the public.

Using these criteria, EPI researchers identified 16 professional and managerial occupations they believe to be comparable to K–12 teaching—from accountant to personnel specialist—and then compared average pay for these professions with that of teachers. And they found a wage gap that has grown by a whopping 14.8 percent since 1993.

Again no big surprise to Costello. "I'm a big believer in the whole concept of 'comparable worth,' that people should be paid based on their value to an institution—and what position is more important to education and the economy than teaching?" he asks. You can almost hear the skill meter clicking as Costello describes the growing complexity of his profession.

"I'm responsible for the emotional and physical well-being of students; I constantly face new requirements from politicians, from testing to data collection; and each day I determine how to modify a program to make it work for a child's difficulties. Teaching isn't routine anymore!" nea

Click and Find Out More

For more on the EPI study and the hot issue of educator pay, go to *NEA Today* Online.

WWW.NEA.ORG/NEATODAYEXTRA

PHOTOS TOP: SHANNON DeCELLE

Volunteer.

Just a few hours of your time helps make countless services possible. Whether you'd like to help out on the front lines or behind the scenes, there's something everyone can do to help prepare people in your community. Join the more than one million Red Cross volunteers and find out how when we come together, we become part of something bigger than us all. To get involved, contact your local American Red Cross chapter or visit **www.redcross.org**

American Red Cross

TOGETHERWE Make a plan | Build a kit | Get trained | Volunteer | Give blood

Together, we can save a life

What Windfall?

Little-known Social Security provisions slash pension checks.

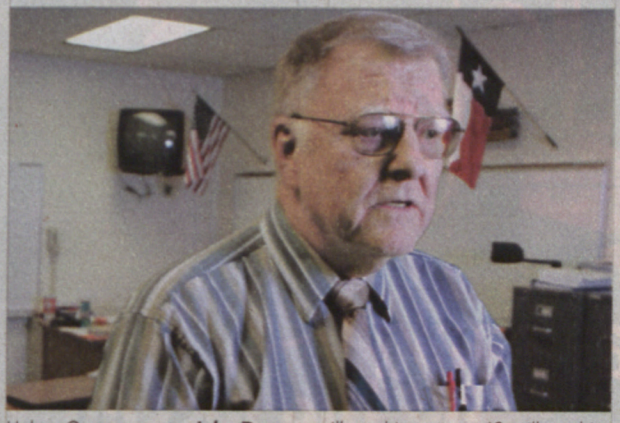
Odessa, Texas, teacher John Duncan, who turns 70 in December, got a letter recently from the Social Security Administration. Just when, the feds wondered, did he plan to retire?

Duncan had to chuckle at the letter—but it was a bitter-sweet laugh. That's because Duncan is one of hundreds of thousands of teachers and ESPs snared by one of two obscure laws that severely cuts the Social Security benefits of deserving public employees.

The Windfall Elimination Provision (WEP)—which penalizes individuals who earn some income in jobs covered by Social Security, but who retire and draw a pension check from a system not covered by Social Security—will take a major bite out of Duncan's benefit when he finally decides to call it quits.

Duncan worked in the oil industry in Texas for 20 years, paying into Social Security all the while, before taking a job teaching near his home in Odessa. Depending on when he retires, the WEP will reduce his Social Security benefit by as much as $300 a month.

"I paid into Social Security, so I don't look at it as double-dipping, which is what some politicians call it," Duncan says. "I just assumed all along that I would have that money, and, all of a sudden, I find out the money's not there."



Unless Congress acts, **John Duncan**, still teaching at age 69, will see his Social Security benefits cut by several hundred dollars a month.

The WEP, along with the Government Pension Offsets (GPO), penalize employees who retire with a public pension but who also qualify for some Social Security benefits. Most worked in 15 so-called "non-Social Security" states (see box).

The WEP doesn't just affect people like Duncan who come from the private-sector, either. It routinely slams teachers and ESPs who go from a district or state that participates in Social Security to one that doesn't.

Georgia retiree Cheryl Sarvis found that out the hard way. Sarvis taught for 16 years in the Thomas County school district (which is covered by Social Security) before spending the last 12 years of her career in the Atlanta public schools (which isn't). Had Sarvis worked in Atlanta first, then retired from Thomas County, she'd be eligible for a Social Security benefit of $800 a month. Instead, as she learned on the brink of retiring, she'll lose nearly half of that amount.

"No one who depends on their Social Security and teacher retirement lives a lavish lifestyle," says Sarvis. "What we get is *not* a windfall."

NEA supports bills in both houses of Congress to fully repeal the GPO and WEP, says NEA's Randy Moody. But congressional leaders have blocked action on those bills. In the meantime, NEA is backing the Public Servant Retirement Protection Act (PSRPA) that would change the formula by which the WEP is calculated and result in increased payments for many NEA members affected by the WEP. The new bill includes language to ensure that those affected by the WEP would earn the higher of either the benefit they would get under the current system or their benefit as calculated by the new formula. "It's a first step," Moody emphasizes.

Intense lobbying by NEA activists helped to win the PSRPA a hearing before a House subcommittee in July, and subcommittee chair Clay Shaw says he'll move the bill forward as quickly as possible.

Time is running out on this session of Congress, though. Help overturn these unfair Social Security provisions by taking the time to:

Learn more about the offsets. Go to www.nea.org/lac/socsec and you'll find a wealth of information about the WEP and GPO—and how they may affect your benefits.

Contact your member of Congress. Let 'em know that you expect full repeal of the Social Security offsets, and that you support passage of the PSRPA as a first step. You can send messages directly from www.nea.org/lac/socsec.

—JOHN O'NEIL

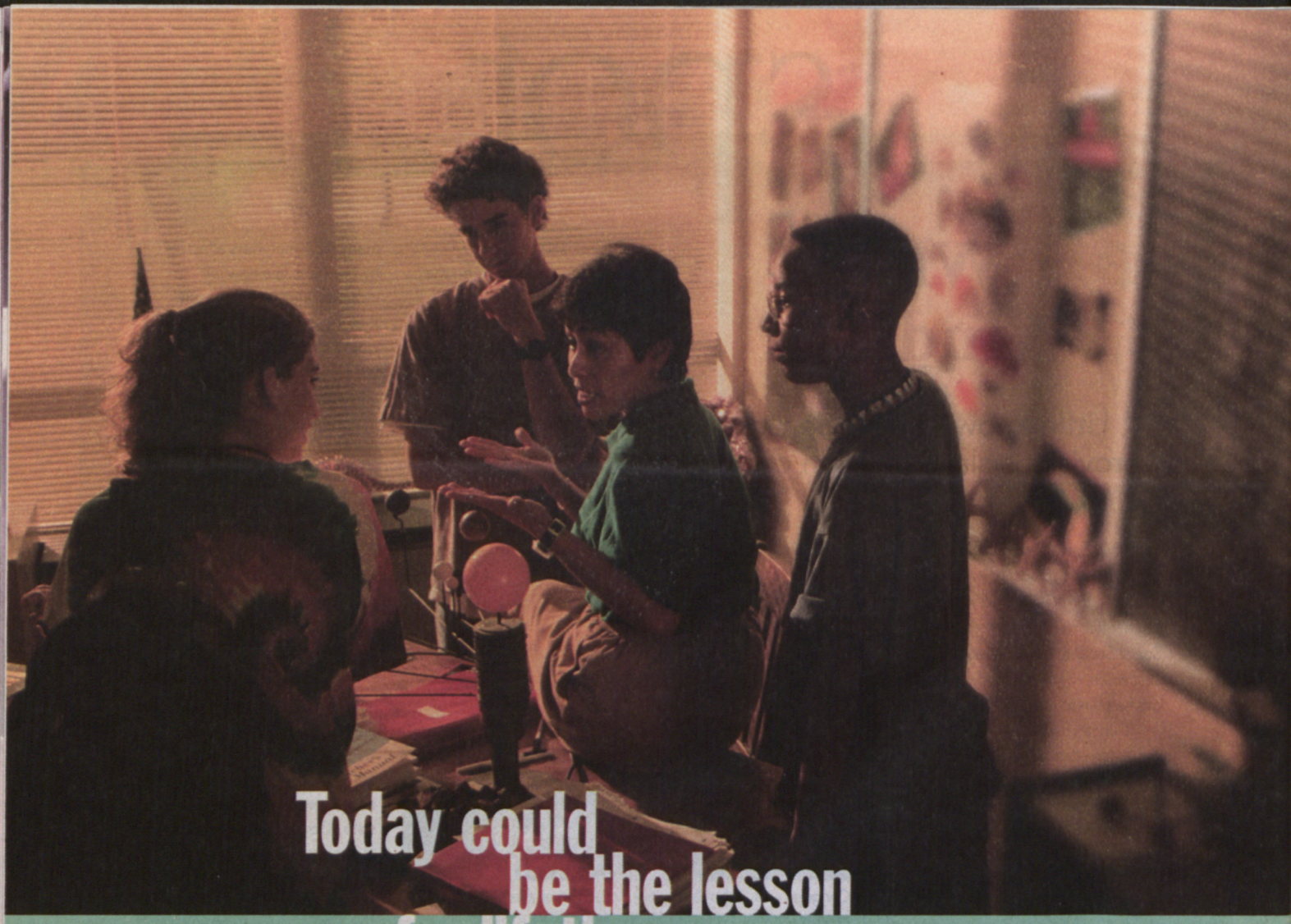
The State I'm In

You may be affected by the WEP or GPO if you work in the following states in a job not covered by Social Security:

Alaska	**Illinois**	**Missouri**
California	**Louisiana**	**Nevada**
Colorado	**Kentucky**	**Ohio**
Connecticut	**Maine**	**Rhode Island***
Georgia*	**Massachusetts**	**Texas***

*Some, but not all, local governments participate in Social Security.

PHOTO: PAUL ZOELLER



Today could be the lesson of a lifetime.

Let's face it. Health class isn't enough to counter all the bad information kids are getting about drugs. So whether you teach science, social studies, theater or language arts, we're making it easy to incorporate drug awareness education into the standards-based material you already need to cover. Log on to **www.teachersguide.org** to find classroom activities designed to help you talk about drugs with your students.

Anti-drug lessons last a lifetime.

TEACHERS.

THE ANTI-DRUG.

Victory for a Living Wage

Alabama support professionals organize and win a decent salary.

Not so long ago, an ESP pay stub in the Birmingham City (Alabama) school system was pretty much a ticket to public assistance. Some 70 support professionals were making only $7,400 a year, and many were clearing just $400 a month in take-home pay.

Birmingham lunchroom workers celebrate their big raise. From left are manager **Mary Young, Tiderrius D. Williams,** and **Lula Mae Howard**.

"Home" and "pay" were stretching it a bit. Some Birmingham ESPs were in and out of homeless shelters, some rode the bus to work, and some just walked for lack of the fare.

That all started to change on August 10. In direct response to a nine-month "living wage" campaign run by the 1,090-member local affiliate, Birmingham ESP (BESP), the school board approved a new pay scale that offers support professionals some hope for the future.

Among other things, this schedule, effective September 1, boosts the starting hourly wage for a school nutrition employee from $6.59 to $9.50 and increases minimum pay for a nine-month classroom aide from $14,463 to $15,400 a year.

By agreement of BESP and the district, some veteran nine-month aides will progress more quickly to a new $20,300 maximum. And some 12-month aides will advance sooner to a new max of $26,478, hiking pensions.

This, incidentally, is a *negotiated* agreement—in a state where educators don't have the "right" to collective bargaining.

That's the beauty of an NEA living wage campaign. With high numbers (BESP signed up some 90 percent of potential members), hard work, and NEA guidance, any ESP unit in *any* state can win a decent raise.

BESP received tactical advice and a living wage grant from NEA. But "this campaign was solely run by ESPs," notes Alabama Education Association UniServ Director Jeff McDaniels.

These activists pursued "every avenue" to decent pay, McDaniels adds, telling compelling personal stories in ad hoc forums with the superintendent, "interest-based" bargaining sessions, the media, and mass rallies at school board meetings.

BESP's best single weapon: the firm support of parents. On drive-time talk radio shows, parents and other local residents learned about rock-bottom ESP pay—contrasted with six-digit administrator salaries—and the district's problem in retaining school lunchroom workers.

Before long, the district miraculously found money for an ESP raise, moving from a $42 million "deficit" to a $7 million "surplus" in the space of just a year.

Thank those angry parents.

Parent and community support is vital to a living wage campaign, says teaching assistant Debbie Minnick, president of the Education Support Professionals/Ithaca (New York), which bargained—with the backing of NEA-New York—a whopping 50 percent pay increase in 2002.

ESP/Ithaca enjoyed 100 percent membership, notes Jorge Rivera, an NEA collective bargaining specialist. "You've got to increase membership before you seek a living wage."

And you've got to think big. "We ESPs need to think differently about our wages; we need to be more aggressive and self reliant," Minnick says. "This is a human rights and social justice issue, and a matter of *respect* for what we do!"

For more on wage strategies and NEA living wage grants to local affiliates, contact bargaining specialist Jorge Rivera at Jrivera@nea.org.

—DAVE WINANS

Six Ways to Decent Pay

Want to start a living wage campaign in your district? NEA experts recommend that you:

1. Boost your local Association membership. Only numbers talk when you want a school board to listen to your needs.

2. Take ownership of your campaign. Association staff can offer advice, but only volunteer ESP activism—and a burning desire for justice on the job—can bring life to the living wage.

3. Do your research. Doubt any district's claim that it "can't afford" to fund a decent wage; look where *else* it spends its money. And tap the Internet—or a local college or organization supporting higher pay for working people—to research living costs in your community.

4. Line up your allies. Where possible, approach parents and community groups *before* starting a living wage drive. Let them know that folks working with their kids need good pay to stay and grow as professionals.

5. Be visible and tell your story. Wear, say, an "I deserve a living wage" T-shirt to school once a week. And use every available forum, from school board meetings to the local media, to explain what life is really like on a pauper's pay.

6. Be persistent. You won't win a living wage overnight. But fairness is an issue that never fades.

More ESP stories in this issue:

- **New Mexico ESPs, teachers send a bad boss packing** – *Page 19*
- **Louisiana para wants President Bush to pay a visit** – *Page 23*
- **South Carolina ESPs join indoor air quality teams** – *Page 34*

PHOTO: DAVID STOUT

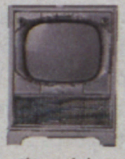
THERE'S NOT ENOUGH ART IN OUR SCHOOLS.

NO WONDER PEOPLE THINK

CARAVAGGIO

IS A GUY ON THE SOPRANOS.

It's hard to believe. Here's a 16th-century Baroque master whose bold naturalistic painting style first created a sensation, then a movement. A guy whose life was filled with the turbulence and excess of more than a dozen Mario Puzo novels. This guy who, while troubled, ultimately found redemption and immortality in his art. But does the average kid on the street even know who Caravaggio is?



If you're looking for Caravaggio, you're very, very cold.

A self-portrait of Caravaggio as Bacchus. Honestly, he wouldn't last 10 minutes on The Sopranos.

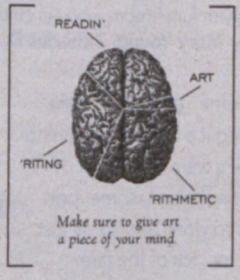
Fuhgedaboudit.

Too bad. Especially when you consider how much our children can learn from the conflicted life of a great artist like Michelangelo Caravaggio.

He grew up in less than ideal circumstances. Most of his family died in the plague. Much of his youth was misspent on the mean streets of Rome. And as a young artist he struggled for years to make a living. He was angry. Yet the angry contrast between light and darkness in his work is the very reason why it now hangs in countless museums around the world.

If nothing else, it's a case study of the importance of having art as an outlet. Unfortunately, one we're fast removing from our kids' lives.

If the arts are indeed a vital part of your child's education (and studies show you believe they are), then you should demand his or her fair share. To find out how to help, or for more information about the benefits of arts education, please visit us at AmericansForTheArts.org. Because, as Caravaggio would tell you, life without art is torture.



Make sure to give art a piece of your mind.

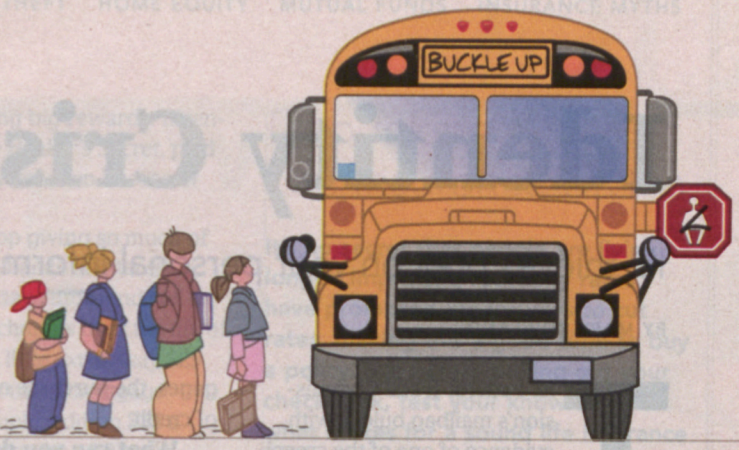
ART. ASK FOR MORE.

Ad Council

For more information about the importance of arts education, contact www.AmericansForTheArts.org.

AMERICANS for the ARTS

Should students be required to wear seat belts on school buses?



YES

Over a decade of study has shown me that seat restraints on big school buses are an effective safety device. Professional, medical, and parent associations want them. The industry opposes them because of cost.

Follow the money: The original school bus safety regulations in the 1970s included seat belts. Intense pressure from the bus contractors association and school officials blocked that requirement when the standards were revised in 1977.

The contractors were honest about it. Their February 1976 newsletter said their organization "wishes to say thanks to all of you for your help, letters, telegrams, trips to Washington again and again and again. This effort will save every purchaser of school buses over $300 per bus."

The industry continues to argue that seat belts don't make students safer. But one of many authoritative reports supporting seat belts concluded that even 50 percent lap belt usage could reduce deaths and injuries up to 20 percent. School buses are very safe as they are, but that 20 percent can amount to precious lives saved and life-altering injuries averted every year.

Many drivers are against seat belts because they don't want to be responsible for making kids belt up and stay belted. Also, they're afraid the belts will be used as weapons. I understand that. I'm a veteran driver and have similar concerns.

But my occasional experience with seat belts does not support this fear. When the driver has clear authority to refuse to transport any student who won't buckle up and stay buckled, seat belts can help maintain a calm, safe school bus. Once or twice off the bus and to the office is all it takes to get the unruly child to comply.

Where transportation providers permit defiant children to ride buses, we must expect vandalism and misuse of the belts as weapons. The solution is for districts to back up their drivers and put aides or cameras on buses where they're needed, not to resist seat belts.

JAMES KRAEMER has driven a school bus since 1989 in Oregon. He is an active NEA member and founder of 2safeschools.org, a Web site whose purpose is "to save one child's life."

NO

The modern school bus is by far the safest vehicle on the road. In an average year, there are about seven or eight student fatalities on school buses. That's one hundred times less than the number of students who die using other ways of getting to school: on foot, riding bicycles, or in cars.

Crash data show that belts on buses would give little, if any, added protection.

All modern buses have a built-in safety system called compartmentalization, mandated by federal motor vehicle safety standards over 20 years ago. It requires seating with strong, well-anchored, closely spaced, high-backed seats, padded both in front and back.

Additional arguments against seat belts are many. Students will use the metal buckles as weapons against other students. Some will even use them to break bus windows.

Lap belts by themselves are dangerous. Installing shoulder belts properly requires reworking the interior of school buses. Many school districts would say this is "much too expensive."

I have yet to hear of a seat belt arrangement that can be adjusted safely and swiftly to fit 60-pound elementary school kids and 200-pound high school football players. Both ride the same buses.

Bus drivers will be expected to enforce seat belt rules. Many students will not want to wear belts. Even if the driver walks the bus to see that every student is buckled up, some students will be unbuckled by the time the driver sits down.

A bus aisle full of loose, dirty seat belts would be a driver's cleaning nightmare.

Some kids think it fun to hook belts across the aisle, a major safety hazard when they get tangled and kids trip over them.

There is a need for seat belts on smaller special education buses. Those are an entirely separate matter because of fewer riders with special needs. But seat belts do not belong on the bigger buses.

FRANK HYDEN has been driving a school bus since 1988, first in Carpentersville and then in Crystal Lake, Illinois, where he helped organize the bus drivers' union.

WHAT'S YOUR OPINION?

Should students be required to wear seat belts on school buses?
To vote, visit our Web site at www.nea.org/neatoday and see the results instantly.

Should teachers allow students to call them by their first names?
The tally on this *NEA Today* Debate question:
44% Yes 56% No

Should students have to take drug tests to participate in extracurricular activities?
If you'd like to take part in this future Debate, send a brief note to Alain Jehlen, ajehlen@nea.org.

ILLUSTRATION: DYNAMIC GRAPHICS

Identity Crisis

ID thieves prey on your personal information. Here's how to foil them.

BY MARY ROWLAND

The Federal Trade Commission's mailbag bulges with evidence of one of the creepiest byproducts of the technology age. A letter from one man complained that when he renewed his driver's license by mail, it arrived with someone else's face on it. A woman reported that a crook used her Social Security number on his arrest sheet.

Identity theft, or ID theft, is one of the fastest-growing financial crimes, victimizing 7 to 10 million people a year, according to the Privacy Rights Clearinghouse. With your Social Security number, credit card number, driver's license, or passport, a person you've never seen can create a fresh identity—while spoiling your good credit record.

Crooks capture your personal information by stealing wallets and purses; "dumpster diving" (looking for credit card statements and loan applications in the trash); stealing mail from mailboxes to get new credit card applications or account numbers from bills; tapping into your credit report by posing as an employer or landlord; or "phishing" for your personal account information via bogus e-mails.

If your records are stolen and misused, you may find you don't qualify for loans, mortgages, the purchase of a car, or any type of credit.

What can you do to reduce your chances of becoming a victim of ID theft? First, make it harder on the thieves. Don't carry your Social Security card or passport unless absolutely necessary. Check each credit statement you receive carefully to make certain you can account for all the charges. Safeguard any papers with your personal information or account information, and shred any you place in the trash.

Also, watch out for those who troll the phone lines or Internet trying to get you to divulge information. Never give account information or personal data over the phone unless you initiated the call. If someone sends you an e-mail asking you to "confirm" your account information, don't fall for it—legitimate businesses don't operate that way.

If you learn that your identity has been stolen, you've got to play catch-up—and fast. In most cases, you will not be forced to pay off charges run up by an impostor. But identity theft can ruin your credit rating.

Call the FTC's Identity Theft Hotline at 1-877-438-4330 and report the theft. More information is available at www.consumer.gov/idtheft. Contact the fraud department of one of the three major credit bureaus and ask them to place a fraud alert on your file. They are Equifax at 1-800-525-6285 (www.equifax.com); Experian at 1-888-397-3742 (www.experian.com); and TransUnion at 1-800-680-7289 (www.transunion.com). If you notify one of the three, the other two will be automatically notified, and you will be sent reports free of charge. File a police report about the theft and keep a copy for your records. Then notify creditors of any accounts that you think might be affected and close those accounts. Be sure to go over all subsequent mail and credit statements especially carefully.

Take these steps, and you'll reduce the chances that you'll add to the growing volume of complaints in the FTC's mailroom.

ILLUSTRATION: ALAN KING

Home Equity

Pay a little now, save big later

We all know that refinancing a home to get a lower mortgage rate or cutting the repayment time from 30 years to 15 years can save you a bundle, because you're slashing the charges you'll pay in interest. But, with interest rates climbing, those options may seem out of reach for you.

Don't despair. Marc Eisenson, one of my neighbors here in New York's Hudson Valley, teaches us that even taking baby steps to reduce your mortgage obligation can bring big rewards. Eisenson, author of *The Banker's Secret*, paid off his own mortgage when he was 27 years old.

The secret? Stop giving so much of your money to the banks in interest. Homeowners can save thousands of dollars in interest charges over the life of a loan by adding a little extra—say $25 or $50—to each monthly mortgage payment. For example, adding $25 a month to the payment on a 30-year, $100,000 mortgage, saves $23,337 over the life of the loan.

If you own a home, your mortgage company may have offered to sign you up for a "biweekly" mortgage plan whereby a portion of your mortgage payment is withdrawn from your bank account every other week. These plans will save you on interest payments over the long haul. But many mortgage companies take a bite by charging borrowers a set-up fee and monthly service charge to participate in this option. You're better off skipping the fees and adding your own extra payment to your check. Make sure to designate on your check that the extra money is for paying down your principal balance.

Mutual Fund Mess

Over the past year, reports of mutual fund mismanagement and fraud left thousands of shareholders scratching their heads. The problems should serve as a wake-up call to investors to know what they're buying and to hold down excessive fees. Some basic questions you should ask about funds you already hold or plan to buy:

DOES THE FUND PERMIT SHORT-TERM INVESTING? As an investor, you should plan to hold your fund for the long-term. When other investors use the fund to trade rapidly in and out, the costs go up for you. Look in the prospectus to find the fund's policy on short-term trading. Many funds carry a redemption fee for shareholders that hold the fund less than 90 days or less than a year. This fee offers protection to you as a long-term investor.

DOES THE FUND HAVE HIGH TURNOVER? Turnover, which is expressed as a percentage of assets, refers to how often the securities in the fund are bought and sold. Turnover of 50 percent means half the stocks are bought and sold each year. Average turnover is 100. Some funds have 300 percent turnover or more. The lower the better. A fund with 50 percent or less is good. Index funds have very low turnover because they simply hold the stocks in a particular index.

DOES THE FUND HAVE HIGH FEES? Each fund has an "expense ratio," which refers to the percent of the fund's annual assets paid for administrative and management fees. This money is taken out of your investment each year. Again, the lower the better. Look for a fund that charges 1 percent or less in fees. This is usually expressed in basis points. A basis point is 1/100th of 1 percent. So 150 basis points equals 1.5 percent.

The mutual fund mess is not an excuse to stop investing, but it is a call to pay more attention to the costs of investing. Less is more.

Debunking Life Insurance Myths

It's no secret that people are living longer. Improving mortality rates have prompted life insurers to cut rates, making this a good time to buy a policy. But before pulling out your checkbook, test your knowledge of what makes for a sound life insurance purchase.

TRUE OR FALSE?

1. One of the first things you should buy for your newborn is life insurance.
2. A good strategy for saving money on a life insurance policy is waiting as long as possible before buying.
3. A woman who takes care of her children and elderly mother needs life insurance.
4. The cheapest and most efficient kind of life insurance is coverage for a specific need, like cancer insurance or the flight insurance you see advertised at the airport.
5. It makes sense to combine your life insurance with your investment needs.

www.neamb.com

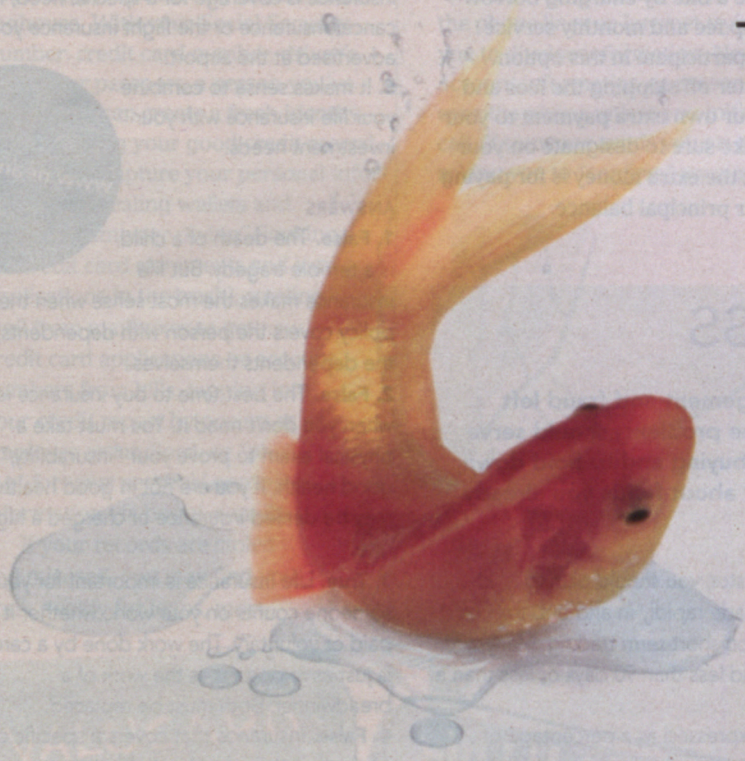
ANSWERS

1. False. The death of a child is a terrible tragedy. But life insurance makes the most sense when the policy covers the person with dependents, not the dependents themselves.
2. False. The best time to buy insurance is when you don't need it. You must take a physical exam to prove your "insurability," or good health. If you are not in good health, you may be denied insurance or charged a higher rate.
3. True. Life insurance is important for you if someone counts on your work, whether it is paid or voluntary. The work done by a caretaker is just as important as the work of a breadwinner. Both must be replaced.
4. False. Insurance that covers a specific cause of death is the worst kind. What you want is a broad policy that covers the death of the policyholder no matter what the cause.
5. False. Investment-type policies are used for estate planning and other more sophisticated financial needs and are unnecessarily expensive for the average person. The most economical type of insurance is called term insurance, which means it pays a benefit if the policyholder dies during the term of the policy. Term insurance is best for young families and those who need pure insurance protection.

ILLUSTRATION: MICHAEL LOTENERO

"WHEN I HAVE AN ASTHMA ATTACK I FEEL LIKE A FISH WITH NO WATER."

–JESSE, AGE 5



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Teacher's Out

How do you prepare for a substitute teacher?

ANSWER: I tell my students that if there is any bad behavior, it will be dealt with by me when I return. I keep a Substitute Folder with:

- class lists with reliable students highlighted
- seating charts
- lesson plans
- extra credit puzzles
- where to find my history and geography trivia cards, which students love.

I grade work done while the sub took over and hold students accountable for it. I have few problems upon returning—and I never have repeat problems.

TONYA ANGWIN
Social studies teacher, Manchester, New Hampshire

Frowners

How do you tame a grouchy colleague?

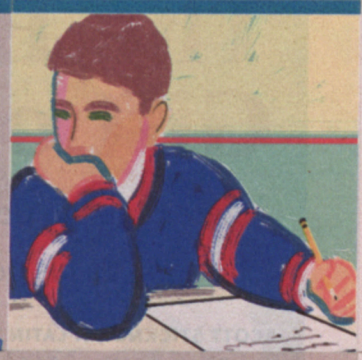
ANSWER: Build a bond with the "grouches." Find out about their life. Leave encouraging notes or little treats in their mailbox or classroom. Do something special for them without revealing yourself or feeling you must get credit for it. Even if they do not seem less grouchy, you will be spending your energy making the world better, and that will make you a better person.

MARTHA PAXSON
High school teacher of students with mild disabilities
Decatur, Indiana

Engaging the Disengaged

Our seventh-grade students do not do homework or classwork. Does anyone have suggestions for how to motivate these students?

SUE KING *Ann Arbor, Michigan*



ANSWER: Here's my strategy:

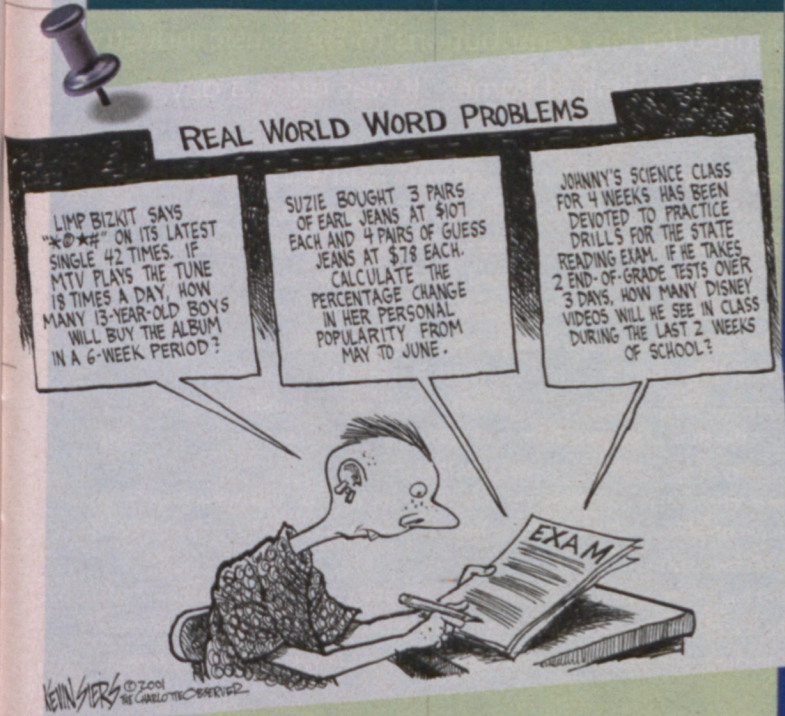
1. On day one, skip the "get-acquainted" activities. Start with a placement or diagnostic test so the kids know you are serious.

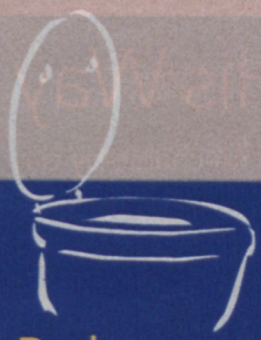
2. On days two through eight, do every fun review activity you have—easy lessons that will allow students to bond with you. Example: Bar charts representing the colors of M&Ms in one package. (I put a package of M&Ms in each child's hand as they enter the room.)

By then, the kids and I have developed good rapport. They know I can have fun with the curriculum, and I have learned their names and like them already.

During the year, I never give homework we haven't started in class. I don't want them to go home and not know how to do it.

BARB DEWEESE
Seventh-grade math teacher, Payson, Arizona


REAL WORLD WORD PROBLEMS
LIMP BIZKIT SAYS "X@*#" ON ITS LATEST SINGLE 42 TIMES. IF MTV PLAYS THE TUNE 18 TIMES A DAY, HOW MANY 13-YEAR-OLD BOYS WILL BUY THE ALBUM IN A 6-WEEK PERIOD?
SUZIE BOUGHT 3 PAIRS OF EARL JEANS AT $107 EACH AND 4 PAIRS OF GUESS JEANS AT $78 EACH. CALCULATE THE PERCENTAGE CHANGE IN HER PERSONAL POPULARITY FROM MAY TO JUNE.
JOHNNY'S SCIENCE CLASS FOR 4 WEEKS HAS BEEN DEVOTED TO PRACTICE DRILLS FOR THE STATE READING EXAM. IF HE TAKES 2 END-OF-GRADE TESTS OVER 3 DAYS, HOW MANY DISNEY VIDEOS WILL HE SEE IN CLASS DURING THE LAST 2 WEEKS OF SCHOOL?
EXAM
KEVIN SIERS ©2001 THE CHARLOTTE OBSERVER



Bathroom Breaks

What do you do about a student who keeps asking to go to the restroom during class? Asking too many questions about the need to visit the restroom presents problems. But how do you strike a balance between those in need and those who just want to meet someone in the restroom for a cigarette or worse?

JOHN SANCHEZ
Middle school English and journalism teacher, Alta Loma, California

Share your wisdom, ask your question!

What's the best decoration you've seen in your staff lounge?

Send your answers to this or to other questions on this page to **ajehlen@nea.org.**

Or, send us a question you'd like to see posted. Please include your name, your job, and the community and state where you work.

For a weekly e-mail of questions, answers, and practical classroom tips, join Works4Me, one of NEA's most popular and useful services. Just send the message "subscribe Works4Me" (without the quotation marks) to **Lyris@list.nea.org.**

ILLUSTRATION TOP RIGHT: LEVAN/BARBEE; CARTOON BOTTOM: KEVIN SIERS

The Best Gift of All

Albert Paduano gets a second chance at life thanks to his nephew, a fellow teacher.

SCOTT STICKNEY, A LATIN TEACHER, decided to get tested as a possible organ donor for his uncle after a family Christmas gathering where Paduano announced he needed a new kidney.

A high school health teacher, Paduano was in excellent shape and running frequently when he was diagnosed with kidney problems about 14 years ago during a physical. He was immediately put on medicine to lower his blood pressure and cut down on the fluid he was retaining. Although the medicine helped for a while, Paduano starting retaining more and more fluid; at one point he had gained almost 40 pounds in water weight.

In October 2002, Paduano was told he needed a new kidney and that he could qualify for the donor list. But he didn't have to wait for a donor; he had four people willing to give him a kidney. His sister, brother, niece, and nephew all offered, but after testing, only Stickney turned out to be a good match.

At first, Paduano was wary of taking a kidney from his nephew. "I didn't want him to donate because I didn't want him to be in any danger." Despite Paduano's reservations, the surgery went off without a hitch. Both teachers had to miss some school, but both are now back in the classroom—Stickney at Hampton Middle and High Schools in Allison Park, Pennsylvania, and Paduano at West Seneca East Senior High School in West Seneca, New York.

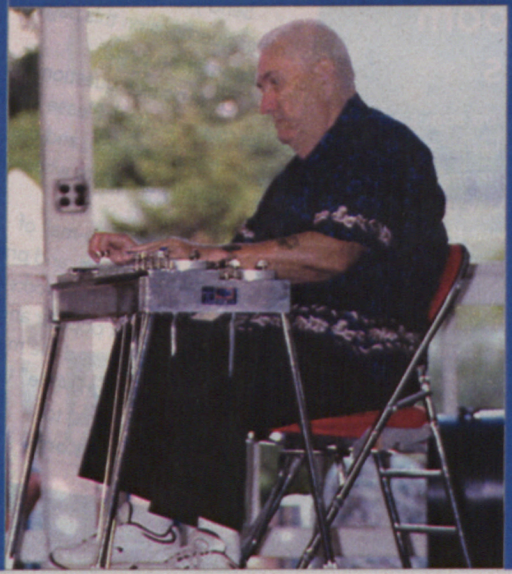
Family photo with **Paduano** and **Stickney** holding his baby daughter.

A year later, Paduano and Stickney are doing remarkably well. "He gave me the gift of a chance at a new life," says Paduano, who returned to the gym and a workout routine at the end of June. Stickney celebrated the birth of a new baby girl at the beginning of July.

—EMILY GOODMAN

Steeling His Way to Fame

A building maintenance mechanic by day and a pedal steel guitarist by night, New York member Wayne Swartwood was recently honored for his contributions to the music industry and inducted into the New York State Country Music Hall of Fame. "It was quite a day when I found out," says Swartwood.



ALTHOUGH SWARTWOOD was introduced to the pedal steel guitar more than 50 years ago, his love for playing remains steadfast. Over the years, he has honed his skill and played with a number of bands, including one during his service in the Korean War.

Swartwood has been with his current band, Rubin Everidge and the San Antones, for five years now, and the leader of the band was the one who nominated him for the hall of fame. The band of four performs anywhere from one to four times a week at the American Legions, VFW Posts, local parks, and other central New York locales.

Although the band typically plays for an audience of several hundred people, they occasionally get the thrill of playing in front of crowds of 15,000, such as the time they opened for country stars Charley Pride and Loretta Lynn.

"It was overwhelming and exciting because there we were on the same stage with people who have been around the world, in front of this huge crowd," says Swartwood, who now has his own claim to fame.

Swartwood has talked with school officials about putting on a special show for the students in the Ithaca City School District, but it's still in the discussion stage. In the meantime, be sure to check out Swartwood and his band the next time you're in New York.

—DONNA CHIU

PHOTO TOP: ERIN KILBER; BOTTOM: DORIS SWARTWOOD

A Lesson in Giving

Ever since Washington member Sara Harlan spent a year living and teaching in Haiti, she has not been able to get the picture of the more than 300,000 abandoned and abused Haitian street children off her mind.

WHEN SHE TOLD her fourth-grade students about her experiences in Haiti, she set in motion an effort that touched everyone involved. "I was telling my class about the hardships the street children in Haiti were facing, and the kids in my class—I didn't put any ideas in their heads—just asked, 'What can we do to help?'" Harlan says.

Together, Harlan and her students brainstormed ways to raise money and finally decided to host a Read-a-thon, a one-month event conducted by five fourth-grade classes that raised more than $1,500 in pledges. In addition to the awareness effort she launched at her school, Harlan also alerted her community to the situation in Haiti by donating all $1,000 of the proceeds from her 2003 art show to Haitian Street Kids, Inc., a nonprofit charitable organization that provides children in Haiti with a home and the opportunity for a good education.

But Harlan's generosity did not stop there. As the new librarian at Stanwood Middle School in Stanwood, Washington, Harlan has already held a fund-raiser to help a sister school in Guatemala open up a new library and has plans to hold another fund-raiser this year to continue helping Haitian street children.

"Awareness is the most important thing," says Harlan. "I can't possibly raise all the money necessary to help the children who need it, but if I can raise awareness with other people, then that's how compassion begins to snowball."

—DONNA CHIU

Grooming Tomorrow's Leaders

Retired member Robert Farmer looked at his long-time hometown of Springfield, Tennessee, and felt that while young African Americans lived in the community, they hadn't yet seized the opportunity to lead it.

Robert Farmer (at left) helps groom new leaders like **James Thomas,** now Robertson County Commissioner.

SO FARMER SET OUT to grow new leaders. The result was Robertson County I Care, Inc., a nonprofit organization dedicated to community service and to grooming young African-American men for government leadership.

Thirty-eight young men currently participate in I Care. The group raises funds to provide two or more college scholarships each year to local high school graduates, and to distribute holiday gifts to children of low-income families. I Care also supports a YMCA-sponsored program to mentor kids who have had early encounters with the court system for misdemeanor crimes.

As for developing young leaders, I Care is on a big roll. "Our members have not only lobbied the county commission successfully to improve neighborhoods, but we helped elect one of our own, James Thomas, to the county commission," says Farmer. "And we're grooming some future prospects."

After years of dedication to the local schools and community, Farmer shows no signs of letting up. "I feel like I've truly been able to contribute to the community, and as long as I feel that way—and my health holds out—I'm going to keep working at it."

—MATT SIMON

GOT A TIP?

Do you have an interesting story idea? Contact Sabrina Holcomb, section editor, at **sholcomb@nea.org**

PHOTO TOP: KARL RADLEIN; BOTTOM: DAN LOFTIN

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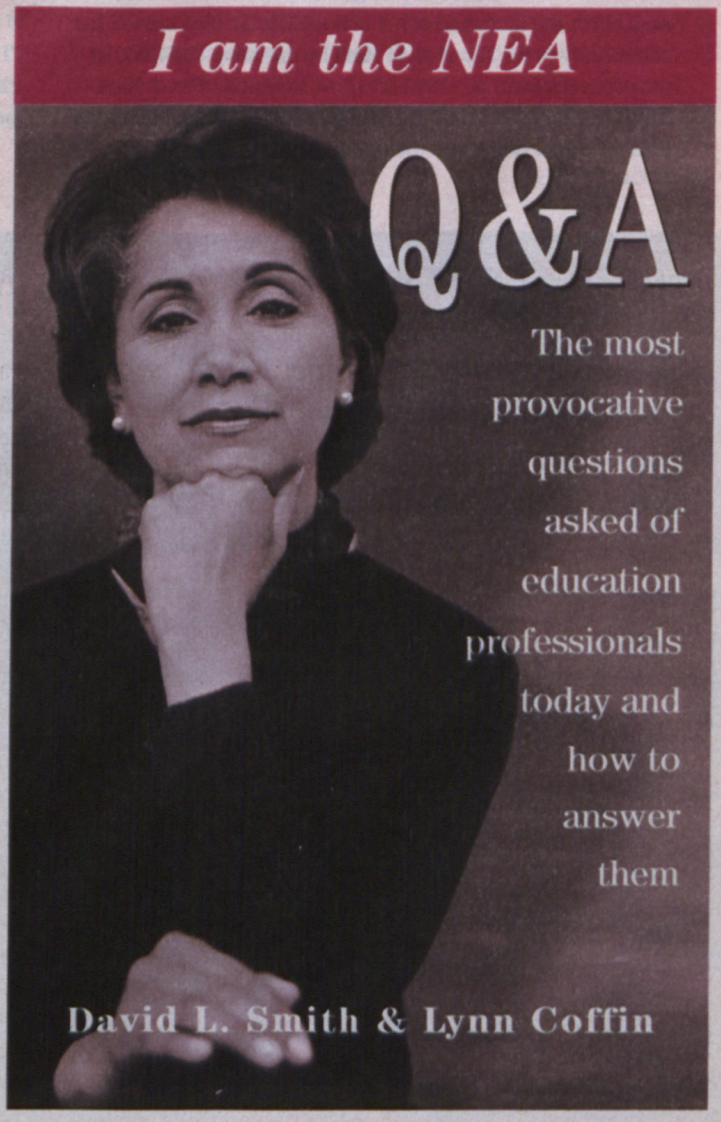

I am the NEA
Q&A
The most provocative questions asked of education professionals today and how to answer them
David L. Smith & Lynn Coffin

resources

55 **NEA Grants** CLASS grants can help fund Student Program chapter community projects.
56 **What's Up at HIN** Stop pollution from school bus idling as part of Clean School Bus Day.
57 **In Print** New fiction book puts young readers in the mood for Halloween.
58 **Take Note** Field internships available for the NEA UniServ Program.
60 **On the Web** It's almost Election Day and several sites help you and your students prepare.
60 **Books by NEA Members** A new novel portrays how adolescents deal with tough issues.
61 **Heads Up From NEA Member Benefits** Start saving early for your retirement.
61 **Diversity Calendar** Promoting school bus safety in October.
62 **On TV** Politics, deserts, and Broadway: October shows cover topics for any interest.
62 **NEA's Read Across America** Grants, prizes, and reading resources abound.

Youth Leaders for Literacy Grants

NEA will award 20 grants of $500 each to student-led initiatives through Youth Leaders for Literacy, a joint program of NEA and Youth Service America (YSA). The Youth Leaders for Literacy initiative helps youth direct their enthusiasm and creativity into reading-related service projects. During the seven-week program period and beyond, the program aims to create a groundswell of literacy service in communities across the country.

Grant applications should propose youth leadership in developing and implementing a project that begins on NEA's Read Across America Day in March and culminates on YSA's National Youth Service Day in April.

Grant applications must be postmarked by **October 22, 2004.** Winners will be announced in December 2004. To download an application, go to www.nea.org/readacross/volunteer/images/yflapp2005.pdf.

PHOTOS: PHOTODISC

GRANTS WITH CLASS

Across the country, NEA student members are making a difference in their own communities, and to support them, NEA provides grants of up to $1,000 to student chapters who want to launch CLASS (Community Learning through America's Schools) projects.

CLASS Grants are the NEA Student Program's answer for two of today's most vital needs:
1. Building community support for public education, and
2. Addressing critical educational and social problems that face our communities.
Prior grants have funded local efforts to:

- Have a book drive
- Conduct a fund-raiser for school supplies and materials
- Offer after-school tutoring
- Work with a center for at-risk children
- Participate in adult-learning programs
- Support Big Brothers-Big Sisters of America Inc.

Tell us how your chapter would like to make a difference in the community, and you could be the recipient of our next CLASS grant! For more on applying, visit www.nea.org/student-program/programs/class.html or contact Malcolm Staples at 202-822-7123; mstaples@nea.org.

STUDENT POSTER AND ESSAY CONTEST

The Heart of America Foundation, a nonsectarian, nonpartisan, nonprofit, humanitarian organization, invites students in grades 1–12 to submit posters and essays illustrating the importance of one of its "Ten Core American Values." The poster

contest is open to students in grades 1–5, and the essay contest is open to students in grades 6–12. Posters in any medium should be a minimum size of 8 x 11-in. Essays should be titled, double-spaced, and not exceed 500 words.

For more information, go to www.heartofamerica.org. Each winner will receive a $100 Savings Bond; two-night trip to Sarasota, Florida, including airfare with one parent or guardian; and two tickets to Busch Gardens. The submission deadline is **October 15, 2004.**

ELEMENTARY MATH GRANTS

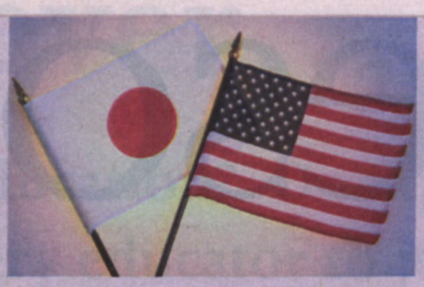
The National Council of Teachers of Mathematics offers the Irene Etkowicz Eizen Grant for the 2005–06 school year. One grant with a maximum of $6,000 will be awarded to a teacher working collaboratively with other teachers of the same grade or within a grade band (K–2; 3–5) in one school or district to improve mathematics instruction. The grant recipient must be committed to becoming a teacher-leader in elementary school math.

Applicants must (1) have taught elementary school mathematics for at least three years; (2) currently be assigned at least 50 percent of the time to teaching in an elementary classroom; (3) have mathematics as a regular teaching responsibility; and (4) have a demonstrated commitment to become a teacher-leader in elementary school mathematics.

For more information, including proposal guidelines, go to www.nctm.org/about/met/eizen.htm. Application packets must be postmarked by **December 3, 2004.**

STUDY IN JAPAN

The Fulbright Memorial Fund Teacher Program makes it possible for U.S. primary and secondary educators to visit Japan for a fully funded, three-week study. A minimum of six awards will be given to each of the 50 states and



Washington, D.C., to reflect a broad cross-section of the U.S. primary and secondary educational community.

Recipients of the grant will travel to Japan to participate in a three-week program that features an orientation to Japan followed by visits to primary and secondary schools, teacher training colleges, cultural sites, and industrial facilities. Meetings with Japanese teachers and students, and homestays with a Japanese family are also key components of the program.

The program is administered by the Japan-United States Educational Commission (JUSEC) through its program office in Tokyo. For more information, including applications, visit www.iie.org/fmf or call 888-527-2636. The application deadline for 2005 trips is **December 10, 2004.**

INTEL AWARDS

The Intel Foundation will award $10,000 to 22 schools during its 2005 Intel and Scholastic Schools of Distinction Awards, administered by the Blue Ribbon Schools of Excellence Foundation. This national award program recognizes outstanding American schools for academic, literacy, mathematics and science achievement, as well as technology excellence, technology innovation, leadership, professional development, collaboration, and teamwork.

An elementary-level and secondary-level school will be chosen in each of the 10 categories and will receive a grant of $10,000.

Applications for the 2005 year are due on **December 1, 2004.** To apply, or for more information, visit www.schoolsofdistinction.com.

What's Up at HIN NEA·HIN

"THE RED BOOK" WILL SOON BE AVAILABLE IN SPANISH!

This popular booklet addresses how to manage blood on the job, the steps to take to protect yourself, and information on HIV and hepatitis. It is free for NEA ESP members by contacting Agnes Smith at agsmith@nea.org or 202-822-7195. Copies can also be downloaded by visiting www.neahin.org/resources/pubs.htm or purchased by calling 877-250-5795.

LET'S CUT BACK ON DIESEL EXHAUST FROM IDLING SCHOOL BUSES!

While school buses are the safest way to get to and from school, diesel exhaust from idling school buses pollute the air and can affect the health of school bus drivers and the children they serve. This October please take part in Children's Health Month and recognize October 6 as Clean School Bus Day! Ask your school district to put in place a "no idling" policy for school buses. Visit the U.S. EPA's Web site on anti-idling at www.epa.gov/otaq/schoolbus/antiidling.htm for tips, resources, and links. For more information on Children's Health Month, visit www.childrenshealth.gov/calendar.html.

UPDATED SEXUAL HEALTH FACT SHEET NOW AVAILABLE

Did you know that the highest gonorrhea rates in the country are among teenage girls? Don't be left in the dark, get the latest sexual health statistics from the best nationally recognized sources. Order or download NEA HIN's free fact sheet, Sexual Health: By The Numbers by calling 202-822-7570 or visiting www.neahin.org/programs/reproductive/index.htm.

EVALUATE YOUR SCHOOL FACILITY CONDITIONS

Thanks to a broad coalition of educational, environmental, health, and civic organizations, a 2004 School Environmental Checklist is now available to help parents, students, and school staff identify and fix environmental problems in their schools. This new tool also provides resources to develop a preventive and cost-effective action plan to protect children's health and improve school facility conditions. To download a copy of the checklist, visit www.healthyschools.org.

PHOTO TOP: CORBIS

In Print

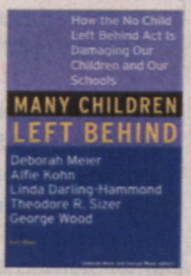
NOT ANOTHER HALLOWEEN DISASTER

The troublesome Herdmans are back to stir up mischief in Barbara Robinson's *The Best Halloween Ever*. To thwart their pranks, the mayor cancels Halloween—including the candy and trick-or-treating—for everyone. Can the Woodrow Wilson School students survive? Can the Herdmans turn the canceled holiday from the worst Halloween ever into the best one? Find out in this humorous book for ages 8 and up. 128 pp. $14.99 from Joanna Cotler Books. To order, visit www.harperchildrens.com.

SAY IT OUT LOUD

In *Read-Alouds and Performance Reading: A Handbook of Activities for the Middle School Classroom*, Christine Boardman Moen outlines different ideas on how to make read-alouds and performance reading fun activities for the classroom. Each chapter in this best-practices book focuses on a single read-aloud or performance reading routine and includes sample preparation sheets, log sheets, tip sheets, and grading rubrics. 144 pp. $18.95 from Christopher Gordon Publishers, Inc. To order, call 800-934-8322.

A CALL FOR CHANGE


How the No Child Left Behind Act Is Damaging Our Children and Our Schools
MANY CHILDREN LEFT BEHIND
Deborah Meier
Alfie Kohn
Linda Darling-Hammond
Theodore R. Sizer
George Wood

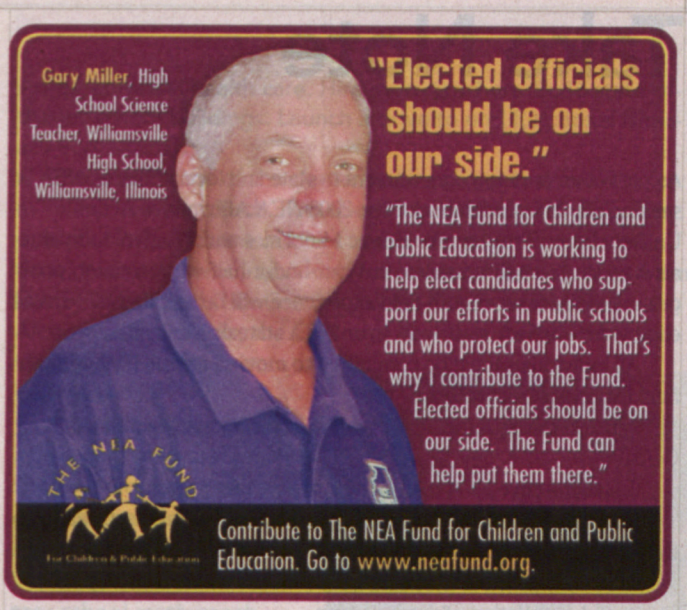
In *Many Children Left Behind: How the No Child Left Behind Act is Damaging Our Children and Our Schools*, edited by Deborah Meier and George Wood, several education writers share their opinions and ideas about the shortcomings of NCLB. With essays by Alfie Kohn and Theodore Sizer, among others, the book serves as a guide to understanding what's wrong with the law and where we should go from here. 144 pp. $13 from Beacon Press. To order, visit www.uua.org/bookstore/ or call 800-215-9076.

SAFELY SURFING THE WEB

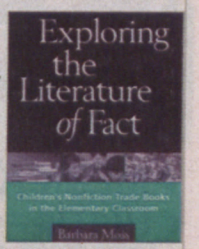
In *Keep Your Kids Safe on the Internet*, Simon Johnson gives parents a guide to what kids are finding on the Internet and how to protect them from bad sites. Chapters include discussions on how kids can avoid harmful sites and electronic messages; reviews of content-filtering, firewall, and antivirus software; and information on spyware and adware. 336 pp. $19.99 from McGraw-Hill/Osborne. To order, visit www.osborne.com.

OLD WISDOM FOR A NEW LIFE

After the death of her grandmother, a young girl embarks on a journey with two crows and the knowledge her grandmother bestowed upon her in *The Crow-Girl*, a translated Danish tale by Bodil Bredsdorff. The girl, who earns the nickname "Crow-Girl" while on her journey, also gains life experiences and lessons while in search of a new family. 160 pp. $16 from Farrar, Straus and Giroux Books for Young Readers. To order, visit www.fsgkidsbooks.com or call 888-330-8477.


Gary Miller, High School Science Teacher, Williamsville High School, Williamsville, Illinois
"Elected officials should be on our side."
"The NEA Fund for Children and Public Education is working to help elect candidates who support our efforts in public schools and who protect our jobs. That's why I contribute to the Fund. Elected officials should be on our side. The Fund can help put them there."
THE NEA FUND
Contribute to The NEA Fund for Children and Public Education. Go to www.neafund.org.

IT'S A FACT



K–6 teachers looking to integrate nonfiction trade books into their language arts and other content area curricula may want to check out Barbara Moss' *Exploring the Literature of Fact: Children's Nonfiction Trade Books in the Elementary Classroom*. The book provides practical strategies, teacher-created lesson plans, examples of student work, and recommended book lists, all geared to help educators incorporate nonfiction into the classroom. 195 pp. $23 from The Guilford Press. To order, visit www.guilford.com.

T IS FOR TYRANNOSAURUS

In *T Is for Terrible*, Peter McCarty teaches preschoolers and elementary-age readers that the Tyrannosaurus Rex isn't such a bad guy after all. The dinosaur, like many children, simply wants others to like him and tries to explain how he is just like other animals and people—for the most part. Beautiful illustrations enhance the book's gentle humor. 32 pp. $15.95 from Henry Holt and Company. To order, call 888-330-8477.

NAPTIME

Re-released for its 20th anniversary with a CD-ROM recording included, *The Napping House*, written by Audrey Wood and illustrated by Don Wood, delivers the classic tale of a household trying to settle down for naptime and an unexpected visitor who foils everyone's plans. The included CD-ROM features a reading of the story, along with songs. 32 pp. $17.95 from Harcourt Children's Books. To order, call 800-543-1918.

Take Note

UniServ Intern Program

As part of an ongoing commitment to state and local affiliates, NEA is seeking eligible candidates for the 2005 NEA Affirmative Action UniServ Intern Program for Ethnic Minorities and Women. Individuals who successfully complete the four-and-a-half-week training program and the three-month field experience will be certified by NEA as eligible for UniServ staff work in an NEA state or local affiliate.

All individuals must be committed to moving for the three-month field experience and must:

1. Be an ethnic minority or female as designated by the U.S. Census
2. Be an Active NEA member for at least one year
3. Have basic knowledge and understanding of the Association at the local/state level
4. Be committed to pursuing UniServ staff employment upon successful completion of the program
5. Have excellent interpersonal skills
6. Have a willingness to participate in intensive training
7. Have a willingness to resign all Association offices at the local, state, and national level
8. Have a willingness to work in a learning environment during day and evening hours and learn new skills and attitudes.

NEA does not guarantee employment of UniServ staff; employment is a state/local decision.

To apply, send a letter of interest to: Brenda Vincent, UniServ Intern Program, NEA Membership and Organizing, 1201 16th St., N.W., Washington, DC 20036. All letters of interest must be received at NEA by **December 2, 2004**, by U.S. mail or Federal Express. Faxed copies and letters received after the deadline will not be accepted. Beginning December 2, an application packet along with basic instructions will be sent after a letter of interest is received at the NEA office. The deadline for applications is January 31, 2005. For questions, call your local UniServ director.

LESSONS IN NATIVE AMERICAN CULTURE

If you're looking for education materials for American Indian Heritage Month next month, visit www.AmericanIndian.si.edu, the Smithsonian's companion site to the new National Museum of the American Indian in Washington, D.C. Under the education section of the site, you can find several teaching guides to different aspects of American Indian culture. One guide, *A Native Place*, sponsored in part by Scholastic, presents American Indians not as cultural relics of the past, but as members of a community whose culture is alive and vibrant. The guide includes lessons and in-class activities around native traditions in music, dance, and art. Although several guides are tied to exhibits at the museum, each booklet contains information of interest to students and educators. Of special note is *Harvest Ceremony: Beyond the Thanksgiving Myth*, which assists teachers in preparing lessons about the first Thanksgiving. All guides can be downloaded for free as PDF files. Other areas of the Web site include online exhibitions and information about internships at the museum.

National Mock Election

On **October 28, 2004**, as part of the National Student/Parent Mock Election, American students and parents in all 50 states and Washington, D.C., will cast their votes for President, members of Congress, and governors (where there is a race), and on key national issues. The mock election makes students and parents aware of the power of their ballot by actively involving them in a full-fledged campaign and national election. The project is a great way to teach students about the electoral process and that their civic activities really do count. Anyone can participate in the mock election, you just need to enroll at the mock election Web site at www.nationalmockelection.com. The enrollment will be forwarded to a state coordinator who will contact you with all the information you need on getting your school's votes counted and your students' voices heard. While at the site, check out available curricula to help you plan lessons on the election.

Speak Up About Technology

In October 2003, NetDay, a nonprofit education technology group, launched the first Speak Up Day, an online student survey of technology use with more than 210,000 participants from all 50 states. Speak Up Day events collect input from all stakeholders in the education community on topics of interest such as technology. Speak Up Day for Students is being held again this year October 11–29 and your school can take part. Register at www.netday.org and subscribe to the Speak Up Day news list for information about this year's event. While there, take a look at the results from last year's survey, "Voices and Views from Today's Tech-Savvy Students: NetDay National Report on Speak Up Day for Students 2003." The site also includes lesson plans and discussion guides for educators to use with students when viewing the report.

Trick-or-Treat for Eyeglasses

Sight Night is a national event sponsored by LensCrafters and Lions Clubs International organized around Halloween or trick-or-treat nights in communities across the country. Volunteers across North America canvass their neighborhoods and collect used eyeglasses during trick-or-treating. All colors, shapes, and sizes of children's and adults' prescription eyeglasses and sunglasses are needed, as well as nonprescription sunglasses. Collected eyeglasses are cleaned, repaired, and hand-delivered during optical missions to developing countries. Children and families interested in participating in Sight Night can get free collection materials by contacting their local LensCrafters or going online to: www.sightnight.org.

PHOTO: ERNEST AMOROSO © SMITHSONIAN INSTITUTION/NATIONAL MUSEUM OF THE AMERICAN INDIAN

Helping Out on Halloween

Good ideas often have humble beginnings. Such is the story of "Trick-or-Treat for UNICEF," which started in 1950 when a group of trick-or-treaters went door-to-door on Halloween with their pastor in Philadelphia. At each door, they not only opened their bags for candy, but held out empty milk cartons to collect coins for children in need overseas. They collected $17 and sent it to UNICEF. The result was bigger than those children ever imagined. Since 1950, Trick-or-Treat for UNICEF has brought new meaning to Halloween. Through the years, the children of the United States have raised more than $119 million to help build a better future for children around the globe. This year, you and your students can continue the tradition by collecting for UNICEF during Halloween activities. For more on how to take part, go to www.unicefusa.org/trickortreat/.

Free Election Lesson Plans

Cambridge, Massachusetts-based Lesley University has developed original, ready-to-use lesson plans and other curricular materials to help you integrate the 2004 election immediately into your classroom. Located at www.lesley.edu/election04, the site includes a series of grade-specific materials (appropriate for grades 1–12) to help you make the election relevant to students.

Developed and compiled by classroom teachers from around the country, the materials comprise modules organized around essential questions, accompanied by well-developed rubrics, and aligned to national standards. The units are designed to be used in parts or as a whole—pick and choose, mix and match. All of the units foster collaboration—within and between classes, grades, schools, districts, and states. The site also contains links to free, Web-based resources on the 2004 election. The links have been screened by teachers to ensure they are accurate and appropriate for students to explore.

The technology required for these lessons and activities is fairly basic: Internet access, and basic Microsoft Office tools such as Word, Powerpoint, and spreadsheets.

Science Friday Kids' Connection

Every week during the school year, the Kids' Connection translates information from National Public Radio's Science Friday program into curriculum for middle school teachers. NPR's Science Friday host Ira Flatow talks about the latest research with scientists and policy makers, authors and advocates during two hourlong segments, broadcast live from 2–4 p.m. ET. Flatow covers topics ranging from global warming to genetically modified foods. The Science Friday Kids' Connection then takes that often complex material and translates it into easily digestible information available online at www.sciencefriday.com.

Each topic contains a full summary of the discussion, with references, suggested questions for students, activities, and related resources available on the Web. Educators can review the content in light of appropriate McRel standards, listed on each topic, derived from the Mid Continent Research for Education and Learning. The Kids' Connection is produced by KIDSNET, the nonprofit organization that helps children, families, and educators intelligently access educational opportunities available from the media.

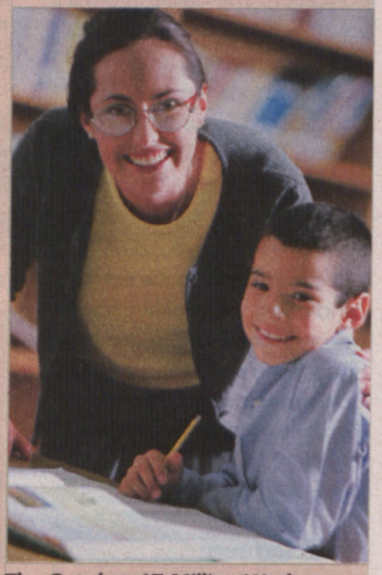
WALK FOR CHANGE

Adopt universal health care. Hire more teachers. Build state-of-the-art school buildings. Launch a drive to end functional illiteracy in America.

Those are some of the demands of a group that's calling for a "million worker march" October 17 in Washington, D.C. The group includes dozens of labor unions, community organizations, and prominent individuals from around the country—from Danny Glover and Dick Gregory to the San Francisco and Albany labor councils, the California Teachers Association, and the 2004 NEA Representative Assembly (RA).

The march will press for a change in national priorities that would benefit educators and students, says Andy Griggs, the West Los Angeles elementary school math coach who organized support for the march at the RA. He said public education today is under siege.

"We're faced with increased class size, more paperwork, national standards, mandated scripted programs, and more hoops to jump through to certify that we're highly qualified. Students are faced with high-stakes testing and with higher college tuitions that make it harder to get the education they need to succeed.



The October 17 Million Worker March will press for a change in national priorities to benefit educators and students, among others.

"Many students have just three options: Walmart or some other subsistence job, the military, or prison," he said. "It shouldn't be that way. That's why I'll be at the march."

Griggs said the purpose of the October 17 event is to build an ongoing grassroots movement that "won't stop with just one march, but will gain momentum from that march."

For more, visit www.millionworkermarch.org.

Pocket Guide to Election '04

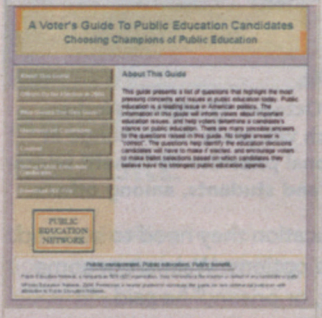
And they're off....Election season is here and now there's a handy pocket resource guide to help voters identify candidates committed to public education. *The 2004 Candidates Pocket Reference Guide: How Do They Measure Up on Children and Education?* covers a range of issues—from vouchers to full funding for special education. Jointly published by 15 education and minority organizations, the guide has questions and facts voters should consider before Election Day. For a copy, call NEA External Partnerships and Advocacy at 202-822-7446.

PHOTOS: PHOTODISC

On The Web

PDF VOTER'S GUIDE

Public Education Network has created a voter's guide that presents questions highlighting pressing issues in public education. The guide informs voters about education issues and helps them determine a candidate's stance on public education. The questions help identify the education decisions candidates will have to make if elected and encourage voters to make ballot selections based on which candidates they believe have the strongest public education agenda. To download a copy, go to www.publiceducation.org/voter_guide/home.asp.


A Voter's Guide To Public Education Candidates
Choosing Champions of Public Education
About This Guide
PUBLIC EDUCATION NETWORK

GET OUT THE GIRL VOTE

Vote, Run, Lead, a national nonpartisan initiative to ignite and mobilize the power of women's votes and women's voices, has launched a Web site with 18 activities designed to help girls (and boys) under the age of 18 learn about the election. The site also includes several links to voter and leadership organizations, an online discussion board, and information on women politicians and women's suffrage. Go to www.voterunlead.org/take_our_girls.cfm.

EXPLORING CORAL REEFS

If your students have a hankering to do some underwater exploring, then dive into the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration's coral reef conservation program Web site. Teachers can access lesson plans and curriculum information as well as information on grants for coral reef study, while students can learn about reefs, the ocean, and weather. The education resources section of the site is separated into age levels, with a special section directed at higher education students. Go to www.coralreef.noaa.gov.

LEARNING FROM OUR ELDERS

There's no better way to learn about history than from the people who were there when it happened. The Grandparent/Elder Project brings history to life by giving students the opportunity to learn about 20th century history from the people who lived through it. A teacher's guide at this Library of Congress site outlines a project in which students become acquainted with the use of primary and secondary sources through interviews and research. Go to http://memory.loc.gov/ammem/ndlpedu/lessons/98/grand/index.html.

SHARE THE TECHNOLOGY

If you're looking for free computer equipment, you might want to try Share the Technology. The site provides a way for donors and potential recipients to search online message boards and databases to find computers and equipment available for free in their region. Donors can also post their goods here. Go to www.sharetechnology.org/.

BOOKS BY NEA MEMBERS

DRUMS, GIRLS & DANGEROUS PIE

By Jordan Sonnenblick

Revealing the emotional struggle of an eighth-grade boy who has found out that his younger brother has leukemia, this novel paints an honest and moving picture of how adolescents deal with tough issues. Written by a middle school teacher from the perspective of a 13-year-old boy, this book will open up conversation both inside and outside the classroom among students and teachers alike. 192 pp. $20 from Greenleaf Book Group Llc. To order, go to www.amazon.com.

KAIPO & THE MIGHTY 'AHI

By Leonard J. Villanueva

Concentrating on a young boy's efforts to prove that he is worthy of going fishing with his older brothers, this illustrated children's book teaches kids the value of persistence and patience. Written and illustrated by a fifth-grade teacher, the book's engaging narrative and charming artwork will pull kids into its Hawaiian setting. 36 pp. $14.95 from Beach House Books. To order, go to www.barnesandnoble.com.

HAPPY FEET, HEALTHY FOOD

By Carol Goodrow

Written by an elementary teacher and founding editor of www.kidsrunning.com, this workbook is full of simple recipes for healthy snacks and suggestions for fun exercise. Easy-to-read information is paired with physical activity logs so kids can track their daily exercise and the healthy foods they eat. Designed for ages 6–16, the book would be good for the classroom, home, or for use in fitness or running clubs. 112 pp. $14 from Breakaway Books. To order, go to www.breakaway-books.com.

Heads Up From NEA Member Benefits

SERVICE, ACCESSIBILITY, PRICE, FEATURES, STABILITY—These are the hallmarks of the NEA Seal of Excellence, a designation which assures NEA members that the products and services offered through NEA Member Benefits are of unparalleled quality:

Service—All our providers commit to giving the highest level of responsive service to members.

Accessibility—Products and services must be offered to the membership on a nationwide basis.

Price—Rates and prices for products are highly competitive in the marketplace.

Features—Products are tailored to meet the special needs of NEA members.

Stability—A thorough investigative process ensures that product providers have the stability and financial strength to remain viable well into the future.

When you make important financial decisions for your family, look for the NEA Seal of Excellence. Visit www.neamb .com for more information about the products that carry this proud mark of distinction.

STARTING EARLY TO SAVE for your retirement can have a big impact on how much you accumulate. Just look at these two savers.

Anne starts investing $100 per month in her retirement account at age 25 and keeps investing until age 65. Assuming an 8.5% interest rate compounded daily, her accumulated savings will be $370,968.20.

Bill, however, postpones his retirement savings program until age 35. Contributing the same $100 per month until age 65 and assuming the same 8.5% interest rate, his accumulated savings will be under $156,000.

If you're interested in learning more about the advantages of starting your retirement investment program early, contact your NEA Valuebuilder® Financial Counselor by calling toll-free, 1-800-NEA-VALU, or visit us online at www.neamb.com.

THE NEA VALUEBUILDER PROGRAM HAS HELPED NEA MEMBERS ACCUMULATE MORE THAN $900 MILLION IN RETIREMENT SAVINGS.

DIVERSITY CALENDAR

OCTOBER

OCTOBER 1–31—LESBIAN, GAY, BISEXUAL, AND TRANSGENDER HISTORY MONTH
A nationally designated month to remember efforts to end discrimination against and promote respect and understanding for lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgendered individuals. For more, go to www.glsen.org/templates/issues/?subjects=2.

OCTOBER 7—SHEMINI ATZERET
Marked by prayer, including a prayer for rain, this holiday comes on the closing day of the Jewish festival of Sukkot and begins on sunset, October 6.

OCTOBER 15—RAMADAN, FIRST DAY
This day begins the Islamic holy month in which Muslims fast from sunrise to sunset each day. The period honors the revelation of the Koran.

OCTOBER 17–23—NATIONAL SCHOOL BUS SAFETY WEEK
This week promotes school bus safety and is sponsored by the National Association for Pupil Transportation. For more, including this year's theme and poster contest information , go to www.napt.org or call 518-452-3611.

NOVEMBER

NOVEMBER 1—ALL SAINTS DAY
A Catholic and Protestant commemoration of all the saints.

NOVEMBER 12—ELIZABETH CADY STANTON'S BIRTHDAY
A early women's rights promoter, Cady Stanton (1815–1902) helped organize the first women's rights convention in 1848 in New York, ran for Congress in 1866, and cofounded the National Woman Suffrage Assocation with Susan B. Anthony in 1869.

NOVEMBER 19—ANNIVERSARY OF THE GETTYSBURG ADDRESS
In 1863, President Abraham Lincoln delivered this speech as part of the dedication of a national cemetery at the Gettysburg Battlefield.

NOVEMBER 21–27—NATIONAL FAMILY WEEK
A week to show appreciation to families and their role in contributing to a strong society. This year's theme is "Connections Count." For more, go to www.nationalfamilyweek.org.

CORRECTION: National Multicultural Diversity Day will be celebrated on October 18, 2004.

PHOTO TOP: PHOTODISC

On TV

SAVE OUR HISTORY: GEORGE WASHINGTON'S WORKSHOP

History Channel, October 1, 6 a.m., ET.
A behind-the-scenes look at the private enterprise of the first U.S. President, from his Mount Vernon distillery operations to plans to increase farm production. The episode can be taped and used in the classroom for two years with teaching materials available at www.historychannel.com/classroom/workshop.

TLC ELEMENTARY

The Learning Channel, October 8, 6 a.m., ET.
This series, designed for grades K–6, consists of segments edited from original documentaries and can be taped and used in the classroom for two years. This month's episode, "Earth's Ecology," focuses on ocean mapping; the states of water; food chains; and the water, oxygen, and nitrogen cycles.

NICK NEWS WITH LINDA ELLERBEE

Nickelodeon, October 18, 22, and 27, 6 a.m., ET, check local listings.
This 30-minute news magazine special, "Kids Pick the President: The Candidates," will feature President George W. Bush and Senator John Kerry as they answer questions asked by young people from across the country, so kids can vote on whom they think the next President of the U.S. should be. Nick News is created and produced for kids in grades 4–6 and can be taped and used in the classroom for one year.

BROADWAY: AN AMERICAN MUSICAL

PBS, October 19, 20, and 21, 9 p.m., ET, check local listings.
This year marks its 100th anniversary of musical theater. Channel 13 in New York has produced not one, not two, but three nights of definitive history, beginning with the groundbreaking work of "impresario extraordinaire," Florenz Ziegfeld. He created the Broadway musical, by using parts of vaudeville, minstrel shows, European opera, and knockabout comedy. Immigrants also played a prominent role: theater greats present and past declare it was the immigrants pouring into New York from every corner of the globe who provided the stories, jokes, and songs needed to create musical after musical. Carol Channing, Tommy Tune, Stephen Sondheim, and others speak with a passion about Broadway. Additional resources can be found at www.pbs.org.

BIOMES: ADAPTING TO DESERTS AND OTHER ECOSYSTEMS

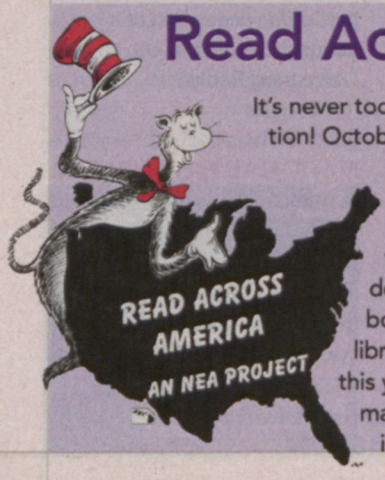
Discovery Channel, October 19, 9 a.m., ET.
Examine how the adaptive crocodile is a threat to prey both on land and under water, how creatures survive in extremely dry environments, and how birds' bodies are specially adapted for flight in this hourlong program. Can be taped and used in the classroom for one year.

THE HAUNTED HISTORY OF HALLOWEEN

The History Channel, October 22, 6 a.m., ET.
This documentary traces the history of the ancient celebration that began as a pagan harvest festival in Celtic Ireland and was later Christianized by Roman Catholic popes. Can be taped and used in the classroom for two years with teaching materials at www.historychannel.com/classroom.

On TV listings are provided by KIDSNET, a national resource for children's media in Washington, D.C., www.kidsnet.org, and by Cable in the Classroom's Access Learning *magazine at www.ciconline.org.*

Read Across Kicks Into High Gear



It's never too early to spread the joy of reading and get ready for the NEA's 2005 Read Across America celebration! October marks the deadlines for grant applications for the Youth Leaders for Literacy Grants from NEA and Youth Service America, and the Polar Express Reading Challenge, created by NEA's Read Across America, Warner Brothers Pictures, and Houghton Mifflin. Your youth-led literacy project may win up to $500 in grant money—go to www.nea.org/readacross or www.ysa.org for information and a copy of the grant application. The Polar Express Reading Challenge, in which K–5 students and teachers can enter prizes, including screenings of the new *Polar Express* movie and signed books by author Chris Van Allsburg, will also result in book donations to under-resourced school libraries. For more, go to www.nea.org/readacross or www.polarexpressmovie.com. And don't forget this year's Read Across America resource kit of posters and a NEA members-only CD-ROM, filled with materials and activities designed to help you let your classroom, school, and community know Reading is "Where it's Hat!" You can find the resource kit materials and more at www.nea.org/readacross.

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EDUCATION SPECIALIST

Love teaching? Like extra cash?

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Healing through Writing

When a young teacher died, her students found their own way to grieve.

BY DONNA MARIE PITINO

**She was like the wind...
The wind carries moisture for
the trees and plants;
Miss Nanni carried care for
her students.**

—MARK

Donna Marie Pitino's students used poetry to work through their grief over the loss of a beloved teacher.

YOU COULDN'T MISS her pink-lipstick smile when you entered her classroom. With her contagious laugh and enthusiastic teaching style, Carol Nanni made eighth-grade science and math fun. She took the time to know each student.

Carol died suddenly at the age of 41. Her students were devastated. For many, this was their first encounter with death. Tough teenage attitudes melted in an instant, and they became heart-broken children.

As teachers, we often find ourselves comforting a child for various reasons. But how do you comfort 50 students at once? Our school put in place a multi-faceted crisis response that included plenty of counselors, but the most powerful help came from the students themselves. They chose to write.

After the initial wave of tears and disbelief, their thoughts turned to Carol's 15-year-old daughter. They made her a large card and everyone wrote their thoughts or simply signed their names. The next day, Ben asked to read a poem aloud. Here's an excerpt:

**You think it is fake,
But it sets in,
You don't like it,
But you really have no choice to lose someone you love...
You've been more than a teacher to me,
Why couldn't nature just let you be?**

Nobody had asked him to write this. Over the next few weeks, "regular" poems on our bulletin board were replaced by poems about the students' lost teacher. Every day, students were glued to that bulletin board. I made copies of the poems into a book for Carol's daughter and mother. The originals were given back to the students. Unlike other returned work (which is often used for "basketball practice"), I saw these pages carefully folded and tucked into binders.

This poem came from Anthony:

**Life goes by so fast that we miss the really important things,
Like the people who really make a great impact on your life,
The people that make us feel good when they're around,...
But once they pass away we really get to understand
Why they would push us that extra mile...**

The students produced vivid similes and metaphors—poetic devices they had studied but rarely used before. Like Mark's (above).

For five minutes at the start of our class, my students write in journals. I suggest topics but they are free to choose their own. Most important, I do not read what they write. For weeks after Carol's death, journals were opened willingly and some students asked that the writing time be extended as they expressed their private feelings.

An impromptu writing assignment arose as we talked about Carol's daughter. How often had the students said thank you or I love you to their own parents? Letters were written to parents, not for a grade, but because life is precious and there are things that need to be said.

Yet another form of writing: Students wrote one or two sentences about Carol, something she taught them or something they will always remember about her. Our local paper printed their work. After reading it, a colleague told me he usually noticed the students who got into trouble. But this article helped him to see how much they thought about things and how deeply they cared.

A final thought from Gabe:

**Now I know you can't be dead
because angels can't die
and you are an angel...
you must be.**

Donna Marie Pitino taught in Torrington, Connecticut, for 13 years. She now writes about education and other issues.

PHOTO: THOMAS CORDY

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24 MONTHS	3.21% APY*	2.36% APY††	2.25% APY††	2.60% APY††
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††All other bank APYs shown in the comparison charts are valid as of 9/1/04; CD APYs are based on balances of $1,000 and terms shown; Money Market APYs are based on balances of $1,000 and yields may be higher for higher balances. Source: *Market Rates Insight*, 9/1/04.

ΔEligible NEA family members include parents, spouse (or domestic partner) and children.

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